

spare **Rib**

P.523/344



**DISTURBING IMAGES OF WOMEN**  
**INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION, BERLIN**

All a girl needs...is a guru

Three women national union officials talk

Italy: mobilising against rape

Acting against Benyon: new abortion satire



MADE BY A MAN WITH WOMEN IN MIND



**BOWI**  
A NEW EP FROM  
**NICK LOWE**

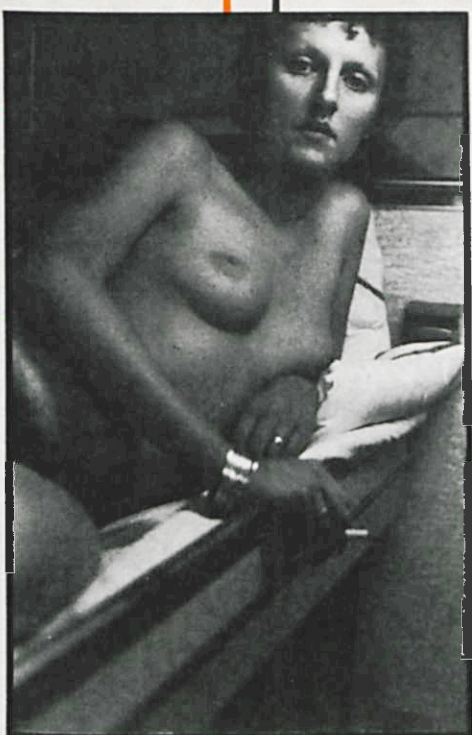


22 ALEXANDER STREET LONDON W2 5SS BRING ON THE NEW WAVE

Photo: Peter Kodick

ADVERTISEMENT





**"I**t is a subtle abyss that separates men's use of women for sexual titillation from women's use of women to expose that insult." (Lucy Lippard). Two exhibitions reviewed (p 35 and p 42) in this issue show the problems feminist artists face when they use women's bodies in their work or show sexist imagery to analyse sexism.

## Cover

"Photographic Still" (2nd take). Devised by Mary O'Shea, performed by another woman artist, writer and friend, to complete this particular section, from "A Visual Time Span" (Super '8' film) by Mary O'Shea.

Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Anny Brackx, Alison Fell, Sue Hobbs, Laura Margolis, Gabriel Mills, Natasha Morgan, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Linda Phillips, Jane Prince, Michele Roberts, Eleanor Stephens, Mary Youngson.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts and letters if you want an acknowledgement.

Spare Rib cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of manuscripts.

Copyright here and abroad in all news, feature articles and photographs is held jointly by Spare Ribs Ltd and the author.

Reproduction in whole or in part of any article is forbidden without the express permission of Spare Ribs Ltd and the author.

Spare Rib is published by Spare Ribs Limited, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Telephone 01-253 9792.

Printed by Carlisle Web Offset Limited, Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle CA2 7NR.

Typeset by Caroline MacKechnie.

Distributed by Moore Harness Limited,

31 Corsica Street, London N5.

ISBN 0306 7971.

## Features

- 6 All A Girl Needs Is A Guru. Alison Fell and Michele Roberts talk to a feminist in search of enlightenment.
- 12 Working For The Union. Three women national officials talk about their job.
- 35 Women's Art 1877 - 1977. What the organisers, participators and feminist critics have to say about Europe's largest, most ambitious women's exhibition.

## News

- 19 Italy - feminists mobilise against rape . . . Uruguay - contraception to be outlawed . . . What is a self-defined sexuality? - one day workshop . . . Talking to the women who wrote and act 'Bouncing Back With Benyon', the new abortion satire . . . Chambermaids strike at a station hotel . . . and much more . . .

## Fiction

- 38 A Week Like Any Other by Natalia Baranskaya. The final part of our serialised diary of a young Russian mother.

## Reviews

- 42 Exhibitions: *Self Impressions*. When is a nude not a nude? Books: *How To Save Your Own Life*. Erica Jong's no longer afraid of flying. Other literature, birth boom books, and fun for all the family. Film: *Riddles Of The Sphinx* by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. *The EGA Stays OK* by the Newsreel Collective.

## Regulars

- 4 Letters. Simone de Beauvoir and sexual slavery.
- 24 Shortlist. Things to do, see, and read.
- 31 Tooth and Nail
- 32 Classifieds
- 47 Subscriptions. Come to the party!



# letters

*please send  
your letters to spare rib  
27 Clerkenwell Close  
London EC1*



In an interview published in SR 56 Simone de Beauvoir said: "The worst thing for women is to find such happiness in sexuality that they become more or less slaves to men, which further strengthens the chains linking them to their oppressors." We asked readers for comments.

Letters she's received since the interview appeared in the French magazine *Marie Claire* have led Simone de Beauvoir to clarify this point:

"Circumstances beyond my control prevented me from looking over the transcript of my interview with Alice Schwarzer. Some cuts were necessary and in general I approve those that were made. But I deplore the simplification of my thought concerning frigidity. If I consider sexual slavery as dangerous for women, that doesn't mean I don't see frigidity as a misfortune — I wrote about this in *The Second Sex*. I quite agree with the correspondent who told me women have a right to pleasure. To look for independence in the refusal of pleasure can only be a last resort."

★ indicates letter has been cut

## Like Hunted Animals

★ Hello SR

I would like to say that the worst thing for women is to be oppressed in *any way* just as it is for men as well. Actually most women are probably more oppressed by the *promise* of sexual happiness than the actual thing. The *illusion* of sexual freedom or the wild promise of happiness through sex that are propagated in the press and society generally are far more damaging than for women to actually enjoy sex. Surely in order to be reasonably happy one needs to be physically relaxed, and to be a part of a relationship which promises physical satisfaction but doesn't actually deliver it is the most oppressive experience you can get.

I know of many women, most women over 35, who are oppressed in their relationships to their men and they definitely are not sexually happy. In fact they're continually bemoaning this situation and wondering what went wrong. Other factors are obviously sustaining the relationship, pressure to conform being a strong motivation for maintaining the status quo.

Perhaps Simone de Beauvoir is not aware what life is like for the ordinary woman as she herself has probably lived apart in her position as artist and social activator. I do agree, however, that in this generation there is a lot of activity which passes for sexual freedom in women which is nothing more than

a form of slavery or prostitution without pay.

Very sad this whole question of women's sexuality because women are like hunted animals whether or not they choose to explore their sexuality, openly or privately. Men can so easily oppress women just by the way that they look at them, as Alison recalled in issue 55 when she was followed and harassed by men; surely there was no sexual happiness for her on that occasion.

The whole question of women as sexual beings is so fraught with ambiguity and pain that I am somewhat amazed at the nonchalant manner in which Ms de Beauvoir mentions "sexual happiness". It's a rare commodity as a practical experience, more likely a nice theoretical social theory.

Cindy Harnist  
No address

## Slavish to Start With

Dear Spare Rib

If a heterosexual woman finds great happiness in sexuality it is not going to make her a slave to men, any more than it is going to make her a slave to her female lovers if she is homosexual, unless she has a slavish and grovelling personality to start with. And if this is the case, she is lucky if she manages to have any very great happiness in sexual relationships at all, because unfortunately it is those people who feel themselves inadequate who find close relationships with others to be so often fraught with anxiety and compli-

cated by guilt. An enjoyment of the sexual aspect of a relationship should only enhance the relationship as a whole, and increase the self-respect and self-love of the woman concerned.

Women who know the goodness of happy sexuality should join with those who are made miserable by sexual unhappiness to overthrow those cultural oppressors — the prejudices of all those parents, teachers, historians, theologians — who for so long caused female children to grow up expecting little and being grateful for less, sexually, economically and in all other interrelated aspects of female subjection.

Sexuality *should* be happy, and this happiness can make for a larger capacity to enjoy the good of the world, and a greater will to fight the evils of society. And the sooner sexual fulfilment for women in our type of society becomes more widespread, the sooner will we be free.

Yours sincerely  
Louise Summers  
Oxford

## Small Change at Home

Dear Spare Rib

I think it's a true quote as things stand at the moment but it's a pretty depressing thought. What always strikes me is how many women who believe in women's liberation and come to meetings etc then go home to a totally unliberated home life. Many of us find it relatively easy to profess beliefs in public but immensely hard to actually live them at home. I admire the women who manage to overcome all this and either find a man who agrees with them or manage to change their man round to their beliefs or else live alone or become gay. But for many of us I suspect we simply go on living our lives with minimal changes though our thoughts and attitudes have changed enormously. There is no doubt in my mind that we are enslaved by our "happiness in sexuality" but the thought of foregoing the pleasure it brings (in an otherwise fairly joyless existence) seems to me a heavy price to pay. I wish I could see a solution. I suppose men will change slowly but by then I'll be past it anyway and in the meantime I've simply given up the idea of changing them. I've generally found it a waste of energy and much prefer to spend that energy on spreading the light among women.

Yours in sisterhood  
Susanna Capon  
London SW6

## No More Essay Topics

Dear Spare Rib,

★ What a dreadful thing to do! Please don't set any more essay topics. I automatically reached out for pen and paper to record two pages of agreement and disagreement with S. de Beauvoir (SR 56) before I realised what I was doing. I'm not sure that I understand your reason for doing it: surely if people feel strongly

enough about something they will write anyway?

Best wishes  
Kathleen Lyle  
Sheffield

## Affirming Lesbians

Dear Spare Rib

How dare you presume that I (or anyone else) am heterosexual?

I am writing to express my dismay and anger at your review of my book of poems, *Cracks*, in SR 57. All the poems in *Cracks* are about women and, indeed, relationships between women. I wrote them because they were things I wanted/needed to say about myself and/or the women I love. I published them because I want to contribute to the building of a feminist literature inclusive of lesbians. There is very little written by or for, rather than about lesbians. The comfort or the thrill of recognition which is a large part of the enjoyment of reading is rarely ours. In bothering to print *Cracks* I was hoping to provide a tiny bit of the affirmation which written recognition affords. By so publicly declaring that my poetry is about men and heterosexuality, you have not only misunderstood my work but denied the book its intended audience. I wonder how many lesbians have read your review and assumed that my book, like most others, is little to do with them/us. In sisterhood  
Lilian  
London W11

As a lesbian myself, I certainly sympathise with Lilian's wish to see more feminist literature written by and for lesbians. I very much regret the heterosexist assumptions which led me to conclude that the object of one poem which I particularly liked, and praised in my review, was a man. However, I feel that if Lilian is so anxious to provide other lesbians with the thrill of recognition she describes, then it would have been much more helpful for readers if she had made it clear in her poems that she was writing about lesbian relationships. Only three of her poems specifically mention women, and do not explicitly refer to sexual relationships with women; the 17 others either refer to a 'you' whose sex is not defined, or else talk about Lilian herself. Given this ambiguity in the text of the poems, I think that any reader who does not know Lilian personally could easily make the mistake that I did.

Michele Roberts

## Warning Women Only

Sheila Miller criticised "the recent rush of women only events" (SR 56), mentioning a woman singer who was "very upset" to discover she was appearing at a women only event "because she disapproved of this sort of sexism".

Dear Spare Rib

I feel there may have been some unintended confusion arising from



Sheila Miller's letter. As the performer she refers to I want to make it clear that I do not and never have had any objections to performing at women only events.

What I objected to on one occasion (the one referred to in the previous letters) was my not being informed in advance that the event was intended for women only. This is a different issue — simply one of courtesy and efficient organisation.

I think that Frankie Green may perhaps have also confused these issues slightly in her letter in *SR 57*. I agree with everything she writes regarding the reasons for women only settings and their function as crucial for us women in the struggle. However, to answer the point about "sympathetic men" — the man whose songs I sing and who accompanied me to the event that sparked off Sheila's letter, would totally accept women's wish to organise autonomously. Any slight annoyance he may have felt on this occasion arose simply from having made a wasted journey due to not having been informed beforehand of the nature of the event.

I hope this makes my personal position clear.

Yours in sisterhood  
Frankie Armstrong  
London SW4

## Campaigns and the Movement

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
At the National Conference in the debate in the mass meeting on the Claimant's Union resolution a sister criticised the London Financial & Legal Independence Group for calling ourselves a Women's Liberation Movement Campaign. We believe this criticism raises important issues.

There are many groups that are trying to fight for changes in the areas we are concerned with: taxation, national insurance, supplementary benefits, housing. Sometimes we are fighting for the same things, but we think it is essential to put forward a feminist analysis of these structures and make feminist demands. For instance it's not good enough to demand that a married couple should be able to elect who will claim supplementary benefit, all married women and women who are cohabiting must be able to claim in their own right. No woman should ever have to be dependent on a man.

But if we hope to win these sorts of demands and challenge the financial and legal structures which enforce women's dependence we must also challenge the psychological and emotional structures which they create and support. We must attack both aspects at the same time. This is why we campaign publicly as members of Women's Liberation Movement.

A recent editorial in *Spare Rib* was rightly worried about the gap that seems to have opened up between the Movement and various campaigns like NAC and the Work-

ing Women's Charter, but if we believe that it is vital to campaign as feminists and members of the Movement we must recognise that the Movement does not have and wouldn't want a delegate structure. Therefore it is difficult for any Women's Liberation Group or Groups to be directly responsible to the Movement. Does this mean that we can never have Women's Liberation Movement campaigns?

Although the Movement has no formal democratic structure it has grown because it is open to every woman to be involved and discuss problems and issues collectively with other women. We need more groups campaigning for Financial & Legal Independence and talking about the ideas and strategies this involves. We found the discussion in our workshop on the Guaranteed Income very stimulating. Because we thought it raised so many issues e.g. our attitude to payments for people looking after children, the relation of the demand to women in waged work, and to the campaign for nurseries that we thought it should be more widely discussed before voting on it. We are now preparing a paper for discussion in the Movement on the whole question of income support for women.

There is no single repository of truth in the Movement. It is only by discussing and working together that we can achieve our demands.

In sisterhood  
London Financial & Legal  
Independence Group

## Up with the Cap . . .

\*Dear *Spare Rib*

Your feature about the diaphragm in *SR 57* seemed to me to be irresponsibly negative. It's very easy to slant articles in virtually any way that one wants. With something as important as the most 'natural' method of birth control *at present*, more effort, in my opinion, should have been made to encourage women to use it, rather than to deter them.

To try and convince some of your readers that the cap is one of the best forms of contraception, I'd like to quote two cases, mine and my mother's. My mother used the cap from the time of her marriage at the age of 16, until the menopause which ended at the age of 50. During those 24 years she became pregnant twice. Both pregnancies were planned and there were no accidents of any kind.

I have used the cap from the age of 19 until now (I'm 36) with a two year break in which I tried the Pill. I not only prefer the cap to the Pill because of the lack of side effects, but I now associate the cap with my sexuality. When I put in the cap which I do as a regular routine every evening before we go to bed, regardless of whether or not I think I'm likely to need it, it makes me feel good and I actually feel sexy inserting it.

If there has been any situation where there has been even a

possibility of casual sex, I put it in several hours before. The spermicide remains effective for at least eight hours, so that really does give one fair leeway. As for early morning sex, I don't bother with leaping up and using applicators etc. On occasions when I've deemed it desirable I've rapidly inserted an orthoform (a pessary recommended for use with the cap) into my vagina. Since these live by the side of my bed, I don't even have to get out of it! But on most occasions I have not bothered. I used a generous amount of spermicide the night before, and fifteen years of not having had an 'accident' prove to me that it ain't necessary to use that early morning extra dollop.

Finally during nearly fifteen years of diaphragm use, I've conceived three times. The first two pregnancies were planned, the third was a mistake and ended in termination. It arose not because of a cap failure, but because I became extremely confused about my marriage.

Your information about research on cap users misses out some important additional facts. Firstly, when referring to the study carried out at Oxford by Professors Martin Vesey and Richard Doll, you omit to mention that although pregnancies on the Pill are only 0.14 per cent (on the cap they are 2.4 per cent) the professors found 'clear evidence of impairment of fertility after discontinuation of oral contraceptives' accompanied by some uncertainty as to whether some pill users become permanently sterile. They also found 'remarkably unfavourable' outcomes of unplanned pregnancies in women fitted with IUDs, both in terms of miscarriage and of gestation in the fallopian tubes. Nowhere did they suggest they found any of this impairment or unfavourable type of pregnancy in cap users.

Secondly, you quote the New York study of 2,000 cap users as being the largest contemporary one. It's a small point but it isn't. The Oxford study by Profs Vesey and Doll is. In it 4,223 women were on the diaphragm.

There are many reasons why I favour the diaphragm. Probably the most important one is to misquote Stella Gibbons. It is 'least flying in the face of nature'.  
Anne Hooper  
Associate Editor  
Forum

## . . . Down with the IUD

\*Dear *Spare Rib*,

The article on the diaphragm (*SR 57*) prompted me to abandon my coil which I had been struggling with for eight months. My last monthly cycle was typical of the eight previous ones — ten days of acute depression; six days of painful cramps; heavy bleeding; followed by 14 days recovery, during which I miraculously forgot the disadvantages until . . .

So I rang my IUD clinic at the end of my last period and asked to have it removed as soon as possible. A few days later, I noticed that the tell-tale blue thread had made its way out of the vagina and I wondered if the IUD was dislodged — I was not going to wait for my appointment in twenty days time, I wanted it out and now.

I went to the casualty department of the Royal Free Hospital and minutes later was lying in an open-backed night shirt being examined by a male doctor. He decided to get one of the gynaecologists to remove it for me, after he had questioned me closely on my motives.

Two gynaecologists arrived, one female and one male — he in apparent command asked her to examine me and he then asked why I wanted it removed. I again explained my history of pain and discomfort. He asked me if I had considered alternative methods of contraception. I replied that I would make other arrangements; not satisfied he insisted on knowing what they were. I told him that I had a diaphragm and that I didn't think it was any of his business to enquire further. I insisted that it was my right to have my IUD removed if I wanted to. He agreed but went on about how good the IUD was and that if I wanted to become pregnant he was very happy for me . . . words like irresponsible and abortion were then thrown around.

While the woman started to prepare to remove it, I said acidly that I had had a termination at 17 and that I would not deliberately seek another. He replied that there was every indication of irresponsibility and that there was every indication that women who had been irresponsible once . . . etc.

When he left the room, his female associate apologised for him in a whisper and said he was always like that, and that I shouldn't take it to heart.

Women in the medical profession — don't take that back seat, challenge those male chauvinist pigs, particularly those male gynaecologists. He made me feel like a rabbit, not a woman in tune with and in charge of my own body. The sooner women's self-help groups catch on, and women take group responsibility and remove the medical alienation of women's bodies the better.

In sisterhood  
Sonia Ennals  
London NW1

## . . . In with the spermicide

\*Dear *Spare Rib*

May I congratulate you on your article on diaphragms. However, one important point that you seem to have omitted is that the New York study also followed up accidental pregnancies, and that for regular users, the pregnancy rate reduced to 0.8 per 100 women per year.

On spermicides, I believe you will find that the last one contain-

continued on page 41 . . . . .



# All a girl needs is a guru

by Alison Fell



Bhagwan pictured in the Rajneesh newsletter, wearing Yves St Laurent towel.

Dinah Brooke, Michele Roberts and I met in the Women's Street Theatre Group in 1970. Since then, of eight women in the original group, two have 'gone orange' — slang for becoming sanyassins or followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Dinah was one, and recently more feminists have followed the same path.

Bhagwan Rajneesh is an 'enlightened master'. He draws from many eastern traditions — Zen, Taoism, Sufism, Buddhism, but adds to these a liberal borrowing from western therapeutic techniques. Bhagwan's teachings are contained in almost non-stop lectures delivered in the ashram\* in Poona, India. Transcribed by sanyassins and printed in book form, they proliferate at a faster rate than Mills and Boon love stories. Then there's the monthly newsletter which speeds out across the globe to the 20,000 followers — who live mainly in the rich western countries, in the USA, Germany, Denmark, the UK. Like the teachings of most Zen masters, they are poetic, jokey, and — depending on your perspective — either crassly anti-political and retrogressive or endearingly contradictory. (I wavered).

Eastern promise is hardly cheap. The trip to India will cost you several hundred (Air India were doing a steady trade near the Bhagwan's stand at the recent Festival of Mind and Body at Olympia.) Living accommodation and money to cover meditations, lectures etc. will come to about £100 a month, then you'll need an extra hundred or so, depending on how many groups you want to do. (A five day marathon group costs around £25). Or else, nearer home, an 'enlightenment intensive' in a meditation centre will cost you £38 a week.

There is no sliding scale for different incomes. For those 'seekers' who end up in Poona flat broke, the teaching is 'If you want the money, the money will come'. Consequently, endless scrounging goes on among the sanyassins.

So what does Bhagwan offer which is so compelling that feminists will splurge this sort of money, take the new names he gives them, and wear his picture round their necks? At first I thought perhaps the appeal lay in some elaborate combination of therapies, for the ashram does contain many people from the 'Growth' or alternative therapy movement, and offers techniques like encounter, massage, gestalt and primal therapy. However, a talk with Chandan, another feminist follower, convinced me that there's a definite distinction to be made between the sort of therapy feminists are gaining strength from now, and the roads to enlightenment offered by Bhagwan.

Therapy with a radical political perspective makes conscious the unconscious forces acting from one's own family history to define one's emotions and behaviour, thus liberating energy and the possibilities for choice. At the same time it aims to uncover how we internalise the ongoing contradictions of the wider sexist, class society, thus clarifying what are the possibilities for taking more control of our lives and moving forward.

Understanding of this kind is not a priority in Bhagwan's teachings. The path to self-awareness and enlightenment demands total trust in Bhagwan. As Chandan put it, openness and surrender to Bhagwan's teachings demand total trust in yourself. The more you can surrender, the more you can trust yourself, and gain access to your feelings in the 'here and now'. Or in the words of the introduction to Bhagwan's book *No Water, No Moon*: "Then a different type of communication happens — beyond words, in the realm of being, of energy, of love. When the head dissolves and the heart opens, then the inner hunger, the inner thirst are given food and drink through his every look, his every gesture, his every pregnant silence."

Bhagwan himself notes that three out of every four of his followers in the ashram are women. Michele and I met Dinah to find out why a feminist would submit to those beliefs, and found our deepest political assumptions challenged. What resulted was not so much an interview, more an ideological brawl:-

\* a community around a religious leader





Meditation at Kalptaru, a London Rajneesh centre

**m**ichele: Dinah, how long have you been 'orange'?

Dinah: Well, I first went to Poona about 18 months ago and I'd heard about the Bhagwan two years before that. What first really turned me on to him was when I went to a 'Growth' movement summer residential, and the woman who was taking it played a tape which I liked very much. She'd just come back from India and she danced around the room looking as if she was really in love, and that struck me very much — the way she 'was' when she thought about Bhagwan. And then in the years after I did a lot more encounter groups and found lots of people in the Growth movement were going to Bhagwan in Poona. I'd then just made some money from a book and my mother offered to look after my kids, so I thought I'd go and have a look.

I was very struck — listening to Bhagwan lecture, and meeting him changed the focus of what I felt was possible.

Michele: Could you say roughly where your focus had been before this?

Dinah: Well, for years my life had been basically about trying to cope with my depression and suicidal feelings. Feeling I couldn't cope with my family and my children and that I couldn't really experience love, couldn't relate to people properly. All my energy really went into being depressed. Then through years in analysis, in the Growth movement, and particularly in the women's movement — I changed a lot. The women's movement particularly made me become aware of politics for the first time — a political way of looking at the world. It was incredibly exciting and changed me a lot. Certainly it changed the way I looked at things.

Alison: Did it change your actions?

Dinah: Yes. It changed the way I lived. Before I'd lived in a tight nuclear family with an au pair girl. After getting into the women's movement I moved into a big house which we ended up sharing with other people and *trying* to live a more communal life.

Michele: So do you see what you're doing now as an extension of feminism or more an extension of other things you were involved in before?

Dinah: It seems like a natural development from anything I've ever done, like the *only* place to go now. And it seems to be a development of very many of the ideas I discussed or tried to live out in the women's movement. What it's doing — it sounds like a contradiction of the women's movement — but it's looking inwards again... it's stopping looking at society in the way society determines what we are, and it's looking at oneself again. In the women's movement friendships were opened to me, but it didn't really open up loving in a wider sense. I've always found it difficult to relate to men, and to my parents and to my children. The Growth movement helped me to begin to relate more easily to them, and I think Bhagwan has helped me do it much more.

Alison: You said before that feminism was about changing one's conditioning. What about the fact that feminism is about challenging and no longer accepting male authority, the patriarchy? Did that enter into your idea of what feminism was?

Dinah: Yes it did. But patriarchal authority only has power as long as it's accepted and reacting against it is partly a way of becoming aware of it and your own feelings about it. But I think that simply reacting to feelings of oppression is part of the whole oppressive system, and that so long as you only react you're not changing anything much.

Michele: So you still feel that patriarchal authority exists in the world and social set-up?

Dinah: Yes, I think I do, and I'd like to put that into the sort of terminology which Bhagwan would use. He says that it is the logical thinking, organised, rational, male mind which prevents one from experiencing oneself, and one's physical being and sensations and feelings. My mind, I realise, is conditioned totally, 99% by what you could call a sort of patriarchal mind, a desire to be logical, realistic, materialistic. I find that marxism fits very much into that category, not wholly, but in my — fairly limited — experience, it was like a construct of the mind which I kept coming up against, and which I couldn't relate to in terms of my own feelings or my own life experience. I found it much easier to say Oh God I'm stupid, I can't understand, I can't argue. The only sort of confidence I had in my mind was in my writing and my imagination. I couldn't relate this to any reasonable or logical ideas. I found that very difficult.

Now I see trying to work out women's problems through the 'male' mind to be destructive and useless. In fact to work out any problem through the mind is useless because it doesn't really touch your own bodies or sensations.

Michele: I would agree that a lot of left thinking has not concentrated on the life that people live and the way we experience the world. I think that is why so many of us women are going to therapy, because we had very little to go on to find out who we really were — we were told 'it's only ideology' or 'we are victims, we are oppressed'. I suppose I would still connect all these horrible splits to the kind of world I live in. Therapy is very useful in getting to know myself as an oppressed woman, and can point to the *potential* for change. But change won't come from just me sitting in therapy.

Dinah: Yes I think therapy is a good way of making one aware of conditioning and oppression. But I think that it is limited because it has an interpretation and it tries to explain. As long as you're trying to explain something then you're not allowing it to

**"Death is beautiful only for those  
who have not been afraid to live. Who loved.  
Who danced. Who celebrated."**



"If you are a man, and still possessive, then you have a feminine mind. If you are a woman, and not possessive you have a male mind. It is said that Mahavir insisted that no woman can enter into Enlightenment unless she becomes a man . . . so every woman who is striving after it will have to be born in the next life as a man, and only then can she enter. This is foolishness — but no feminine mind can enter into Enlightenment, that is true, because the feminine mind means fear and possessiveness.

And with fear and possessiveness, no meditation is possible."

exist. And if we could really experience ourselves existing now, this minute, our complete physical and emotional selves, then we'd be free of the repressive effects of patriarchal attitudes.

Alison: I see it as far more than *attitudes*. I see it as real power, based on who holds the resources etc. — the power of corporate capitalism, the multi-nationals, the State. I see that those who have it will try to hold on to it, and will kill to do it. It's far more than simply one set of people having attitudes which you can make yourself tolerate.

Dinah: It's not exactly a question of toleration . . . but when you say that people will kill to keep the power they have — yes, they will. And so long as most of us are afraid of death then that is *the most* powerful stick anyone could hold over us. We're terrified of the death of our bodies because we're not able to experience ourselves as actually living. If you're not frightened of death then you are not a slave of what anyone can put over on you.

Michele: Do you think you have any motivation for change in your present existence? Take an example — South American peasants who lead a completely hand to mouth existence. Are you suggesting that someone in that position should simply be . . . experiencing their life richly? I don't see what joy they'd get out of thinking even more about their lives, since it's so horrific, what's happening to them.

Dinah: Thinking about your life is always horrific because most people's lives are horrific. But it seems to me that if you have any respect for other people's lives you can't try and interpret them in terms of your own life. It's theirs, and to try to say 'My God how can they have any spiritual development' or what have you, is imperialism. It is laying completely irrelevant concepts on them, it's useless.

Alison: But it's imperialist *not to* extend your conceptions of what you need to what other human beings need — starvation is starvation, in any language . . .

Dinah: Only if you fear death.

Alison: But that leads to a total quietism, total acceptance of everything.

Dinah: That's your interpretation. I don't see it like that. I see that once people cease to be afraid of death then there's an immense amount of energy released, an immense amount of possibilities of pleasure in their own experience. By trying to lay our interpretation of what their experience ought to be on to them, we're just denying their experience. All we can do is to try to free ourselves, and if we are free — the more people are free, then the less oppressive social structures can be, because you can't oppress somebody who isn't affected by them.

Michele: Doesn't that need time? I mean, what about the people who get up at six, clock in at factories, come home at night, go to bed? Where and how do they have the time to experience what other people are experiencing with Bhagwan?

Dinah: What it needs is a change of consciousness. That has nothing to do with time. Consciousness is not a slave of time.

Michele: But I thought followers of Bhagwan needed to study things, experience other people who are into the same thing. Isn't that easier for some categories of people? I suppose I'm talking in class terms now. Is this mainly a middle class movement would you say?

Dinah: I really don't know. In India there is much more religious consciousness than in the west. It doesn't have any class limitations. If you wonder whether that beggar can be as enlightened as I can, you're putting things outside which you should be dealing with inside. You're putting your energy into trying to work out changes that will help somebody else's consciousness, and you can't, you can only change your own. You can't do it for anybody but anybody can do it for themselves.

Michele: So how does the change in consciousness occur? At the moment I have the impression of something quite arbitrary, like St Paul on the road to Damascus.

Dinah: Bhagwan is an 'enlightened' (excuse the word) man. And by being around him you experience a completely different energy from anything you can experience with unenlightened people. Being around, meeting him and living near him gives people the opportunity of experiencing this energy, which is the most powerful, most fantastic force for change which I have come across. It doesn't work at a material or an intellectual level.

Michele: Don't you see any hint in that of woman sitting quietly listening to man telling her what to do — a replay of patriarchal modes of communication?

Dinah: I do sometimes, I did when I first went out there, but after a bit I got to feel that my uptightness about Bhagwan being a man and telling me about how to be enlightened was *me*. It was a closedness on my part. I couldn't take him in because I was seeing him as a man. And he only happens to be a man, with a man's body and a man's beard.

Michele: So what happens in the Ashram?

Dinah: The Ashram is not a collection of people sitting peacefully, getting into themselves. It's a jungle. Bhagwan creates ways of shaking people up so much that all the repressed emotions come to the surface. People's emotions are boiling up and they're continually confronting each other. In fact when I first went there I was horrified because it seemed to be the most competitive vicious society, which provoked in me the most violent feelings. That's on purpose. If anger can be provoked in you by any situation, then you are not free of anger.

Michele: A lot of women I know are getting into the Bhagwan's teaching. It seems to be an important phenomenon at the moment . . .

Dinah: It's the *only* phenomenon!

Alison: Some feminists have always understood the women's movement to be about personal liberation *now* — believing that you are conditioned in various ways by *ideas*, and that change means casting off old ideas and becoming different — I think that is an incomplete understanding of feminism. Individuals change in struggle and confrontation with the world, and don't change that much unless the world changes. There's no real individual liberation without eradicating injustice, exploitation, oppressive conditions — and it is in that process that social relations will be changed and individuals will find more human conditions to live in.

Dinah: I agree that women can change through struggle and confrontation but I think it's not just confrontation with the outside but also with yourself. Always looking at your anger in relation to the outside is a way of escaping from your own fear, your own anger and your own fear of death, your own weakness. My fear of my weakness, my masochism and my own collusion with an oppressive society. I don't think that any social structure has ever changed enough to make much difference, because the people who create them — even post-revolutionary structures are still the slaves of the same emotional binds which they were struggling against and internally they are still slaves of the same patterns of anger and fear and reacting.

"Nobody can exploit you  
unless you are ready to be exploited!  
Nobody can deceive you unless you are ready  
to be deceived! The responsibility is *yours* — so  
be alert, be reasonable. Even in this society you  
can remain absolutely free."





Bhagwan in the beautiful gardens of the ashram. There are 3 - 400 people in and around the ashram at any one time. Those outside must rent rooms and accept a standard of living nearer to that of the local inhabitants — one woman and her child shared a single cold water tap with ten families. There is no creche at the ashram, but it's still possible to free mind and body from childcare for meditation — Indian women eager to offer their services for a tiny wage can always be found locally.

Michele: I think that in the women's movement that discovery of our anger was very liberating and progressive. We didn't have to be slaves to things, we could stand up and say 'that makes me angry, I don't want that to happen'. So the anger taught us something about the world. That's why I've become a socialist, because as well as getting angry at things, I want to stop the things happening, so in a sense I can stop having to be so angry. That does involve real material changes. Yet you're saying that this isn't really important.

Dinah: Well, I'm not saying that it's not important, but that you're not going to stop being angry by getting rid of the situations which provoke anger in you. You're only going to stop being angry by really experiencing your anger and by being able to drop it, not hang on to it.

Michele: I'm still puzzling away at this. Is it a question of transcending the emotions or transcending certain emotions such as anger?

Dinah: Well, it's a question more of going through things to a point where you are no longer identified with them any longer — so that you're not identified with your feelings of anger and oppression, of being a woman. You can allow the anger just to be felt — recognise it, feel it, not repress it, feel it and let it go. Don't cling on to it. Then you're in a quite different situation than when you're identified with it.

Alison: What's the difference? How does it affect how you act in the world? If a man follows you down an alley and is about to rape you how do you cope with that?

Dinah: If someone tried to do that, my fantasy now is that I would be incredibly angry and I would fight. But I don't think I've got to the point yet where I can even feel the full extent of the rage that I know is inside me. So I don't think I've transcended it, or *could* just feel it and let it happen.

Alison: What would Bhagwan's teaching be for you or any individual in that situation?

Dinah: It would be different for every person because every person is completely different and at a different stage. I haven't been in that situation so I haven't asked him.

Michele: Earlier, you used the words 'collusion' and 'slave'. When I think of slaves I think of people constrained against their will...

Dinah: I think of people constrained because they're ignorant or unconscious — I think most of us are, and we're, most of us, slaves.

## FOOD FOR NO-THOUGHT

A couple of pleasant culinary changes around the ashram:

Firstly, the opening of Vrindavan Juice Bar. Located just outside of Meera Dining Hall, the juice bar is extremely popular with sannyasins — with such favorites as 'the bioenergetic creamcheese sandwich', 'the satori fruit smoothies, lassies and pulps', 'sannyasin juice' (very similar to orange juice) and 'the primal cream' (ice, that is).

Secondly, the shifting of the canteen for ashramites to a lovely second floor terrace in Jesus House, overlooking its beautiful grounds.

Ashram news

Michele: But doesn't that mean we could change if we really wanted to? And that in other words people are stupid if they don't change — there's nothing really keeping them down, they just fantasise that there is?

Dinah: I think that businessmen I have known are more enslaved by their own ignorance (and more passive). I'm talking about internal freedom and I really think material freedom is an illusion. Somebody may have money and food but that doesn't make them free. Somebody else may be starving to death but if they are not afraid of death starvation is not experienced by them as something which totally creates their consciousness, they are not a slave of it. I'm not saying that most people who are starving and poor are in that situation but I just think the emphasis on material situations is a red herring.

Alison: Well, you're saying that to a materialist so you're obviously going to be contradicted. I don't see further than life, people's material needs and conditions, people's emotional needs, etc. Once you start talking in terms of a non-material existence, there are no grounds for agreement. I think those ideas can only be used in the cause of reaction, against progressive struggles to change life and make it better, make it nearer what we want.

Michele: Let's get back to the Bhagwan — who looks after him?

Dinah: Do you mean, does he wash his own socks?

Michele: Yes. (Hoots)

Dinah: He doesn't *wear* any socks.

Alison: But he *is* looked after hand and foot.

Dinah: Yes, he is. Because the people who are around him feel that what they want from him and what he can give them is so important that they want him to put energy into that. For him to put energy into cooking his food and cleaning his room is a waste, as we would see it.

Michele: You seem to have the old hierarchy. The struggles we have with men involve their hierarchy, like 'It's much more important for me to finish my work on revolutionary theory than for me to remember what sustains me in that life, which is somebody else looking after my material comfort...'

Dinah: What you object to is a guy feeling that and the woman who sustains him *not* feeling that. I don't *know* what Bhagwan feels but I'm sure he'd be quite happy to cook his own food if that was the way people around him could be best nourished. I

"When a person comes to me he is coming to die, he is coming to dissolve. I will be an abyss to him, a bottomless abyss in which he will fall and fall and fall and reach nowhere."



hate to have to tell you this, but there are ex-radical feminists, ex-members of the women's movement cleaning the bogs in Bhagwan's house, scrubbing the floors eight hours a day, and enjoying, doing it because that's what they want to do.

Also there are people cleaning bogs and floors who hate it but who do it because he's told them to, saying 'Do it until you love doing it, then you'll be free of the tyranny of it. Then you can stop.'

Michele: Has a sexual division of labour occurred over there?

Dinah: It's always in flux. A woman who was quite new was suddenly put in charge of a whole lot of men doing photography, men who'd been there for years. They were very thrown by it and so was she. Bhagwan puts people in situations which stir them up. I don't think he has any conception of what the 'proper' roles for a man or woman are. But if a woman is really bugged by her social role being a cleaner then he might very well put her into doing that in order for her to find out what her relationship to that role is. It's nothing to do with the society, it's to do with the feelings about herself that the work provokes. If it makes you feel like shit to be cleaning a bog then you're a slave of your situation. If you can clean the bog and not feel like shit — either do it or not do it — then you're free of it.

Alison: It sounds as if it could be used to adjust people, like cleaners, to staying in particular roles, to adjust to the existing social division of labour, which stinks.

Dinah: All I can say is that most sanyassins I know are the most chaotic group of people, more 'out of' any regular role or relationship with society than any other people I know.

Michele: It seems to me that all this depends on the authority of the person saying 'Go and do this'.

Dinah: Yes it does.

Michele: And I object to that. I just don't see the difference between the sister superior in my convent school telling another sister to plant cabbages upside down and the Bhagwan saying 'Well if you don't like shit, go and work with shit for a while'.

Dinah: The difference is in the relationship. If you don't trust the sister superior then she's imposing something on you. You don't have to do what the Bhagwan says. If you trust him you do what he says, for if you trust him what you trust him to do is to see where you are and what you need.

Alison: But you didn't trust him at first.

Dinah: No, and I probably don't totally trust in him now, but that's only because I'm not capable of trust. And the only way you can learn from a master — I say master because most of them are men, it's true — is if you trust him. It's the relationship of trust which is the important thing. I know that all my childhood relationships of trust were really messed up and that is the basis of my not being able to love easily, and feeling alienated and cut off. Being able even to begin to trust somebody is an incredible experience. It's worth gold.

Alison: But you mean total trust, don't you?

Dinah: I do, yes.

Michele: Uncritical trust that never shifts and that never has to be re-evaluated and worked out? That's so static.

Dinah: That's what trust is — if you're re-evaluating or judging according to your own concepts then you're not trusting at all.

Michele: I don't believe in unconditional trust at all. If I lose all trust in another person it's up to them to help me find it again. People change, relationships change.

Dinah: But one can lose one's temper with Bhagwan, tear off one's orange clothes and rage at him, and it doesn't change his relationship to you.

Michele: Isn't he a bit like a Big Daddy figure — you're really safe with him because you can rant and rave at him and nothing ever happens. So you never have to face the violence that really happens in the world.

Dinah: What happens is what happens in yourself. Somebody really beating you up is what happens to your body. If you're frightened of pain and you're frightened of dying then being beaten is really terrifying.

Alison: But almost all human beings — except mystics — have always been afraid of these things and considered them evils.

Dinah: But it seems to me that that is the sad thing — that's what makes it impossible for us to change, really.

Michele: But Dinah, look, you've been involved with that women's group on IndoChina. I can't mesh the two things together. One minute you're saying 'It's all in the Vietnamese' heads' — how they relate to their kids being napalmed and how they relate to their sisters having to go down to Saigon to become whores. Why not let these sorts of situations continue? Let the Vietnamese or whoever just change their consciousness and learn to live their lives with all these things happening, then they are enlightened? I can't accept that. It's terrible.

Dinah: The jumps you're making are not the same as the jumps I'm making.

And in that antagonistic deadlock, we stuck.

So why is the orange movement growing — and appealing to radical people? Is it partly a defeatism in the left which it feeds on? For religions and the search for individual transcendence have always trailed at the heel of a basic conviction of powerlessness, of fatalism; perhaps it's hard for some middle class radicals to hold on to the idea that collective action has the power to change anything. (Remember how in the early 70's the Guru Maharaj ji and his Divine Light mopped up exhausted radicals from the American anti-war movement . . . )

What Dinah and Chandan seem to be saying is that the enlightenment promised through Bhagwan provides a liberation from arid rationality and rigid out-dated ways of thinking about how to revolutionise our lives. As Chandan, who still sees herself as a socialist and feminist, put it: "Bhagwan is a challenge to the women's movement just as the women's movement was in part a challenge to the old hierarchies and rigid ways of organising of the male left."

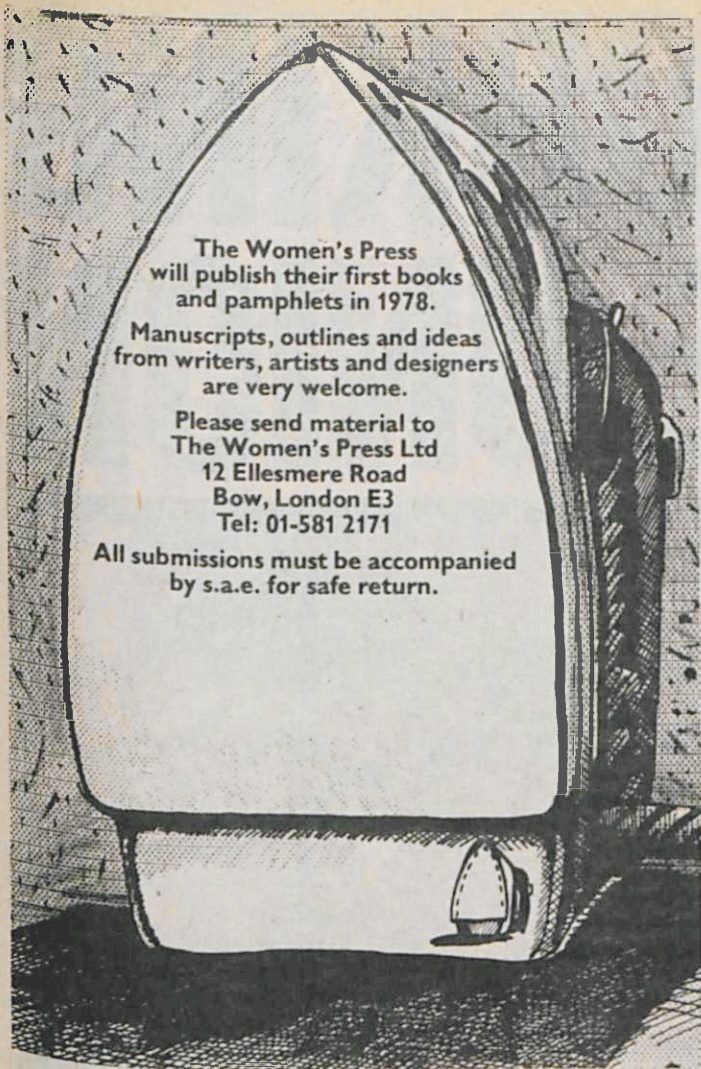
Maybe. It seems true that, however difficult it is for feminists to swallow some of the patriarchal aspects of the 'orange' movement, Dinah, Chandan and other individuals have been spiritually energised by it to some degree. But spiritual energy isn't of itself a power which can change society — it's a potential, which can only be realised in concrete, and in the end, concerted, action. Meanwhile, the mechanisms of State power trundle on — and who's to challenge them? □

*We will be publishing an article about feminism and spirituality in the next issue.*



"Confusion is my method."





## Middlesex Polytechnic

### Active Trade Unionist?

- Working for your members?
- Wish you had more time to think about your union activities?

Yes? — then join us on the

### Diploma in Industrial Relations and Trade Union Studies

Two years, evenings only,  
or one year full-time,  
based at our Enfield location

Contact: Admissions Office, Middlesex Polytechnic, (Ref. C123),  
82-88 Church Street, Edmonton N9 9PD. 01-807 9001/2

### FREE PREGNANCY TESTS

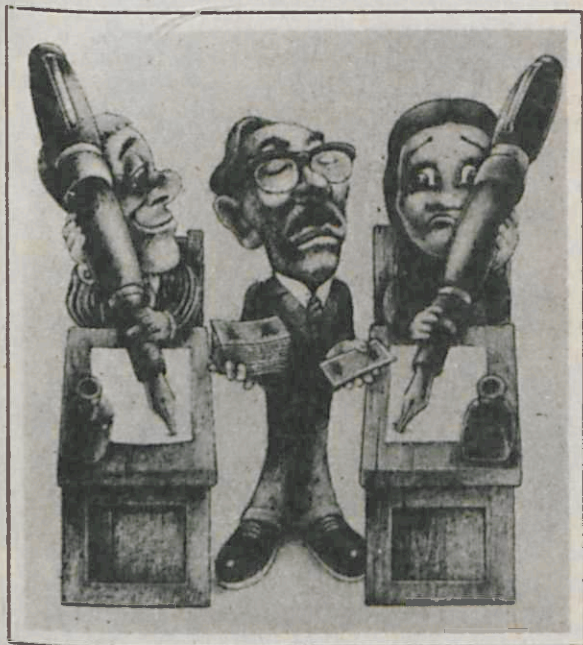
Also advice on abortion,  
vasectomy, female sterilisation  
and fertility control. British  
Pregnancy Advisory Service is a  
non-profit making registered  
charitable trust. Telephone  
Birmingham (021) 643 1461  
Brighton (0273) 509726  
Cardiff (0222) 372389  
Chester (0244) 27113  
Leeds (0532) 443861  
Liverpool (051) 227 3721  
London (01) 222 0985  
Manchester (061) 236 7777  
Sheffield (0742) 738326

**BPAS**



Learn the 3,000-year-old Chinese  
Art of KUNG FU for PRACTICAL  
SELF-DEFENCE, LASTING  
HEALTH and FITNESS,  
PERSONAL CONFIDENCE and  
PEACE OF MIND. Classes all  
over London. Visit, ring or write  
to: WU SHU KWAN (KUNG FU  
CENTRE) No.1 The Colonnades,  
Bishops Bridge Road, London W2  
Telephone (01) 229 6354

## The TASS Guide to What They Say. Number One.



— This is the employer with the Low Paying Record —

“You might think  
you’re doing  
broadly the same  
work as him.  
I don’t !”

“Women doing broadly the same  
work as men should be paid the  
same.” So says the Equal Pay Act.  
But saying is one thing, paying is  
another. Employers have had years  
to regrade, reclassify and  
reorganise jobs to avoid this. And  
if your boss says no, where does  
that leave you?  
You could start a legal battle.

Difficult, uncertain and possibly  
expensive for a woman alone.  
Or you can join TASS.  
We are the union for all  
staff in engineering. Our womens’  
membership is growing faster than  
any other staff union.  
Our policy is simple.  
Men’s Pay for Women. And we  
don’t just say that, we make it work.

We have a spectacular  
record in equal pay negotiation.  
If you want the benefit of our  
strength and expertise contact  
Judith Hunt, our National  
Women’s Organiser. Better still,  
have a word with your local TASS  
representative.

## TASS

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers  
Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section  
Head Office  
Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1QN  
Telephone 01-948 2271



Anny Brackx asks  
three trade union officials  
responsible for women's rights  
what it means to be .....

# WORKING FOR THE UNION



PETER HARRAP (REPORT)

"Mature women have tremendous strength."



# MARIE PATTERSON

is 43 and a member of the Labour Party. She was appointed National Woman Officer to the Transport & General Workers Union in 1963, and occupies one of the two seats reserved for women on the TUC General Council. She is also a member of the Women's Advisory Committee to the TUC as well as being a Commissioner on the Equal Opportunities Commission.

★ *How did you get your job?*

The job of National Woman Officer, as it was then called (which is now illegal)<sup>1</sup>, was open to any woman in the union with over two years membership. A man couldn't apply for it.

★ *What was your previous job?*

I worked here in Transport House. I started as a shorthand typist and continued in office work. You see, every union officer has been something before they become an officer — a busdriver, engineering worker or clerical worker. What is unusual in my case is that I went straight from being a lay member to being a National Official. Normally you'd be a district officer and then maybe a regional officer first.

★ *Why was the job of National Woman Officer created?*

Originally, the old Worker's Union, which was one of the amalgamating unions when we formed the Transport & General Workers Union back in the 1920s, had a large and active women's membership, with some of their officers being women. It was felt that a general workers' union, which had more women members than most unions put together, should have at least a woman at national level, to represent the broader aspects of women. The other thing which was far more pragmatic, was that we would be much more eligible to put a woman on the TUC General Council into one of the two seats reserved for women there.

★ *What exactly do you do?*

Most of it is nothing about women. About one third of my work you could define as 'women': talking to women, talking about women's rights to all sorts of people, mostly men. I think the rather fierce young women from the Women's Movement tend to forget that there've been a hell of a lot of people at it for a hell of a long time. And it's not just happened because they came into existence.

★ *Do you think the Women's Liberation Movement has been a help?*

It's been a help, but it claims too much for itself. They've had some minuses too because in overplaying their hand occasionally, they've tended to turn it all into trivia. Most of the media see Women's Liberation as a great hoot; they don't see women trade unionists as a great hoot.

★ *Do you feel oppressed as a woman, in this job?*

No, never, never. Too busy to be oppressed.

★ *Maybe you should continue saying what your job consists of.*

Another one third of it is the TUC and frankly, the two women's seats on the General Council play their part in the power politics of Congress (TUC).

And of course, once you are elected to the General Council, you are there not just as a woman, you're there as a full member, which is why you take part in all the committees as you gain seniority and why you can become president of Congress, as I did.

The third part is normal trade union work: negotiations, committee work.

★ *Doesn't that sometimes bore you?*

Can be, but then again it's committee work, despite its rather humdrum nature that gets stuff done eventually.

★ *How do you cope with housework, family, working the way you do?*

I haven't got a family and my next door neighbour looks after my cats when I'm away. I try and organise my social life. I tend to invite people to a meal, which takes a lot of pre-arranging, to make sure I'm going to be there. But it is perfectly possible to run a very disorganised life in an organised way.

★ *Do you not, because of your position, feel alienated from rank and file women?*  
You're meeting people all the time when you're speaking and you find the questions that are worrying them from the audience.

★ *Do you consult with other women union officials, concerned with women's rights?*

No, we aren't a Women's Movement within the trade union movement. We have the Women's Advisory Committee on which I sit and I meet the women on that obviously.

★ *How widely is it known in the union that part of your job is doing work about women?*

Well, an awful lot of people know of me, know me, who I don't know — put it that way. I always make it quite plain that I'm here to help anybody who wants it. But on the whole, they get help without needing to come up as far as this. The ones that I get are the real snorters. This is much more necessary, now that we have the equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation, because there are wrinkles in it.

★ *Have you ever been to a tribunal case on equal pay?*

No, it's not the job of a national officer to go to a tribunal. But I am a member of the Central Arbitration Commission and I've sat as a judge on an equal pay case and it was highly successful. It's wonderful to get somebody an extra shilling. I used to enjoy getting a farthing in the old days on the Wages Council.

★ *There's been a lot of talk about how ineffective tribunals are for women to get equal pay. What is your opinion?*

The legislation has tended to cloud what's really been happening, because all that you see is the tribunals, which are actions taken by individuals; and frankly collective bargaining isn't about individuals really is it? It's a very bitty approach. But then on the other hand you cannot possibly deny the individual the right to go and argue for equal pay.

★ *Don't you think that in fact the tribunals have acted in a discriminatory way?*

Ignorance often. But the Appeals Tribunal<sup>2</sup> has put a lot of the things right.

★ *Some people say that the law has been wrongly formulated and that it should have been 'equal pay for work of equal value'.*

How would you work that? That really means job evaluation, and job evaluation on the whole is there to make sense of the status quo. It is nothing to do with equal pay. It's about ranking jobs in order of importance, on which you will then put pay rates. The people that at present judge what is important tend to think that the person who is currently earning at the top of the salary range has a more important job than the person who is at the bottom. And at the end of the day, when the women come out in grades one, two and three, in majority, and the men in grades four, five, six at the high rates, all you've really done is straightened out a wages' structure. You haven't really struck tremendous blows for equal pay for equal value. Until women get really trained and get into other jobs, so that you blur the edges of what is women's work and what is men's work, job evaluation is of advantage to management.

★ *In 1972 the T & G passed a resolution at Conference condemning the fact that there's so few possibilities for girls to train in industry. What does the union do about this?*

First of all you've got to get the employer, and that can be with branch pressure, to say "yes, we will make a determined effort to encourage girls to apply for apprenticeships", right? You've also got to have teachers, who are prepared to encourage girls to think in terms of taking apprenticeships. You've got to have parents and girls themselves geared up to thinking that it's not an appalling thing for a woman to get her



hands oily. We're asking a hell of a lot of a sixteen year old girl; it's got to be a very strong-minded girl, who breaks out into new ground. Until more parents and teachers give full encouragement it will only be the 'odd ball', literally, the American expression, who comes forward, and she's probably going to get frustrated, because she'll find there's no opening for her and then you're back to square one.

*★ Why do you think are there so few women on shop steward training courses?*

A lot of it is that they don't want to leave home for a week, or whatever it is, involved in the course.

*★ Probably that's to do with not having creches, or a lack of childcare facilities.* Well, not necessarily. It can be, but on the whole, the stewards are less likely to have heavy family commitments. I don't think that the creche makes, at the moment, all that much difference. If we had more creche facilities, I think you might just encourage a few more women with younger children. But, do you know, it's a hell of a thing, isn't it, to ask them to work at home with their family, to work outside the home at their job, and then say "and of course we want you to do some extra work".

*★ Do you see any ways for changing that?*

Do you? Even if you have the best creche facilities, you still have the area of time, when the family is all at home together; unless you have, as they do in Russia, a one-week creche where the woman puts it in on Monday morning and brings it out on Friday night. I'm probably the biggest campaigner for more nursery facilities in the country but, frankly I don't think that would go down in this country. The more I listen to women talking, the more I think, and this was very clear in Russia, they find a great satisfaction in family life. And you know, that is an instinct you're not going to break. And I'm not even sure one wants to break it.

*★ You said you've campaigned for nurseries. Have you seen a change over the years?*

Yes I have. I think there's less opposition from the women now to nurseries.

*★ I would've thought the opposition came from men, who'd feel threatened by their women going out to work.* Oh no, they've got used to the idea of women going out to work now. I'm not saying that there aren't still backwoods-men and backwoodswomen, there are. But on the whole, the climate is much more liberal.

*★ But surely there is some form of antagonism. The Trico<sup>3</sup> strike for example would have ended quicker, had the men come out in support of the women.*

I'm not sure, myself; I'm not convinced I know what the Trico strike was about.

*★ Why didn't you find out?*

Well, I've got enough to do without finding out about other people's strikes. But I think it's not necessarily a straight male/female problem. I have not found an equal pay or sex discrimination problem, which wasn't a part of a much wider problem of bad industrial relations. And I think the Electrolux<sup>4</sup> one is a classic example. The Electrolux has had a Commission On Industrial Relations enquiry into its piece work rates in 1975 because the piece work's gone haywire and no longer means anything. It had a five or six weeks' strike last year about something else. The management is inefficient. They've set men against women, because it's certainly been helpful to them to have a divided workforce. Everybody's against everybody. And the men have got as many problems as the women, I suspect. And in a time of incomes policy, when you can sort the equal pay one out, but not the other, this tends to make a lot of other problems. You've got to remember that at the end of the day any factory, any shop, any office, when all is said and done, and we've all blown in, given our opinions, and blown out, and left a bit of aggro behind us, all those people have got to live together. In fact most equal pay things have gone through quite smoothly, believe it or not. When you think of the number of establishments employing women and the number of strikes there've been on this particular issue, it's minimal. Can you name them on one hand? For heaven's sake do let's get it into perspective (see *SR news* over the last year, for a different view).

*★ What other women's issues has the union been concerned with?* Maternity leave, creche facilities, pensions and we're in favour of abortion facilities.

*★ But you haven't even got a policy on abortion as a union. Will you encourage people to put a motion forward at your next conference?*

I think I'd soon get into trouble if I went round perverting democracy. Let me put it this way. I don't make a habit of going round telling people what they should put forward.

*★ Do you think a man could do your job?*

Yes. A lot of men are in many ways representing women day in day out.

*★ So you don't think that women's similar socialisation makes for better understanding of the problems?*

I think it can be of help to have had the same sort of problems, yes; there is a rub-off of discrimination on all of us. On the other hand I don't think it's helpful to have too many chips on your shoulder. And women who have a lot of chips get up everybody's nose.

*★ You mean to be a trade union official you have to be somebody fairly strong that doesn't feel oppressed?*

That's right. You'd never do your job at all. Well, you would never get appointed; but even if they made a mistake, and did it, you'd never last, because your members wouldn't put up with it.

*★ So you feel fairly liberated and don't feel treated as a secondary citizen?*

Not overtly no; I'm not saying there aren't occasions that you suddenly get fed up to the teeth and realize that people are treating you as a woman, as opposed to as a person yes, and that is very irritating. But you cannot keep weeping about it you just get on with it. But if you are a member of the General Council; if you have been president of the TUC, there's a rub-off; it gives you a certain status and a certain self-confidence. Age has a great deal to do with it. Mature women have really got a tremendous strength. But very few women are allowed to become thoroughly mature.

#### TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 (01-828 7788).

General Secretary: Jack Jones

Women workers are mainly in engineering; food, drink and tobacco; they are also general workers and non-manual workers.

	men	women
membership	1,511,000	289,000 (doubled over 17 years)
full-time officials	480	3
executive members	39	—
TUC delegates	76	2





MARK RUSHER (IFL)

"Until things have changed, it's safer to have a woman in this kind of job."

## JUDITH HUNT

is 31 and a member of the Communist Party. She was appointed National Women's Organiser to the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section of the AUEW in 1975, and is a member of the Women's Advisory Committee to the TUC.

★ *When did you start working as Women's Organiser and how did you get the job?*

I started 2½ years ago. The job was a staff position which had been advertised nationally. Subsequently the union decided they wanted a Women's Organiser, who was a National Official, and I was selected. I'm the only official that's come from outside the union.

★ *What did you do before?*  
I was a teacher in a technical college.

★ *Why did the union create this job?*  
It was very much a response to the women's movement and a recognition

that women have special problems in society. They felt that in order to answer their needs they needed someone who would concentrate on women, their organisation and recruitment. So my qualification was my activity in the women's movement, the labour movement and my previous trade union.

★ *What do you spend your time on in your job?*

Apart from Women's Organiser, I'm also a National Official which means I have an industrial responsibility: the motor car industry, and also a specific responsibility for education within the union. My responsibility for organising women means that I look after the National Women's Committee, and its administration. I'm also responsible for developing organisation of women within the divisions, that is Women's Committees and women's activities, to keep an eye on our overall publicity, and trying to encourage organisers and the union in general, to be fully conscious of our policy and approach on women.

★ *Has being a woman made your job as a Union Official more difficult and what attitude do male rank and file members have toward you?*

There's an added problem: my age. I'm quite young for a Union Official. Therefore very often at meetings people tend to assume that I'm someone's secretary, but my colleagues here always

take great pride in pointing out that I'm actually a National Official. There aren't that many women around in my kind of position and therefore there's a curiosity among the male rank and file of how efficient and competent I am. There's also a lack of ease very often, at first, because they're not sure how to react. They know that it wouldn't be appropriate to chat you up, but they're not really sure quite how to cope. Usually once they realize that you're there to talk to them like any other official, then it's reasonably easy. But there is quite a bit of double think that goes on at first.

★ *Do you feel oppressed as a woman worker?*

Not as a woman worker, because I'm very well paid. I chose to do a job which obviously is very time consuming but I don't feel oppressed by the working conditions of my union. There's ways in which inevitably you're oppressed as a woman and because I'm paid well I can resolve some problems that other women cannot; like the fact that I have two small children. We pay someone to pick them up from school and bring them home, and during the school holidays they either go to a play-centre or the person that picks them up helps look after them. Also Alan, who I'm married to, has always played an absolutely equal role and in fact probably spends a bit more time with them now than I do.



★ *You're well-paid, and feel comfortable, doesn't that and the status your job carries alienate you from rank and file women?*

I think it would alienate me if I'd not also share all the same kind of problems that my women members face. The reason why we had someone in to look after the kids when they were tiny was simply because I couldn't get them into local authority day nursery. And all the usual hassles about when the kids are ill. The fact that you've actually been through the problems closes the gap. And there is also your general political understanding, commitment and knowledge. I know my situation is different, therefore it's that much more important that I listen and not assume that other people's problems are going to be the same as mine.

★ *How much contact do you actually have with women members?*

Well, most weeks I have meetings either in a factory or branch meetings, where I meet and talk to ordinary members, so it's quite a substantial contact.

★ *Is there a built-in mechanism by which women can approach you with their specific needs?*

Any woman can ring here and quite a lot of them do. But we have a National Women's Sub-Committee. So that we very often contact the National Women's Sub-Committee member for the area first and then, if the problem couldn't be resolved, they would contact me. But their first port of call would always be the local divisional organiser.

★ *Do you consult with other women's Officers/Organisers?*

Not in any formal sense, but I take every opportunity to discuss things with people.

★ *I gather you are in favour of positive discrimination. What do you understand by that?*

Well, we have a structure within the union whereby, through a historical accident, there's a rule to have Women's Committees at every level of the union; what we've been trying to do is make them function better. Their purpose is to advise the divisional committees on the particular problems that face women, to build up women's confidence, and help them to take a part in all the affairs of the union. And this has happened; at our last conference for example we had an exact proportion of the total female membership there. And a very high

number of them spoke and spoke well. Two years ago that just wouldn't have happened. For a lot of women it has meant quite dramatic changes in their personal lives. In order to actually get to trade union meetings many women have to put up with domestic disputes; being out on strike for a long time raises more severe domestic pressures for women than for men. That's real life. We've now got many more women involved and active on the branch committees and office committees. So it's positive discrimination in terms of the structure, but also in terms of the amount of publicity we give and the amount of work that people put in on the issue of women. We also feel very strongly that the Women's Committees are there not to carry out all the activity on women, but to see to it that the union as a whole deals with it. Otherwise you could have what's happened over the years: the women's issues just get siphoned off and you have a few dedicated women knocking their heads against a brick wall.

★ *But you are also in favour of maintaining the Women's TUC Conference?*

It's going to take generations to eradicate sex discrimination. And as far as I can see into the future, there will be a need for a women's TUC, for women's organisations and for positive discrimination. The argument is simple: women are discriminated against in every walk of life and therefore, in terms of confidence and in terms of their ability to practically take part in either a union or a political party or whatever, they are handicapped from the word go. It is logical that you compensate for that.

★ *How have you tried as a union to educate male trade unionists into not being discriminatory/sexist?*

What we're after is a unified union for the protection of all our members, both men and women. It gives you a much stronger negotiating position if everyone is unified around a particular claim. But in order to win that, because we recognise the prejudices in society, we put on special seminars, weekend schools on the issue of women's rights for both men and women. We had a very large mixed seminar in International Women's Year on our campaign for 'Men's Pay For Women'.

★ *What women's issues has TASS been concerned with?*

The 'Men's Pay For Women' campaign, where we've been highlighting the gap in

average earnings, what that means, and the limitations of the Equal Pay Act. We have campaigned for equal opportunity and I don't think we've done enough on it yet; we've got to think of more ways of looking at the training and education aspects of it. We've done some work on maternity leave. But what a lot of Women's Committees have tried to raise is the issue of childcare, after-school facilities and play-centres during school holidays. Most working women feel that's a very major question.

★ *How do motions carried at Conference, like the one on nursery facilities, get implemented?*

Any motion that's passed at our conference gets given to a particular committee to deal with. So the resolutions on women are given to the National Women's Committee. We recommended to the Executive that there should be a deputation to see the relevant minister, and to raise it with our MPs which is being done. We also pestered the minister so much about nursery facilities that we were invited to a one-day conference organised by the Department of Health And Social Security on child-care provisions. It could be described as a bureaucratic method of dealing with things, but it is actually parliament and ministers who decide things unfortunately; well or maybe fortunately.

★ *Like many, you are not satisfied with the Equal Pay Act. Can you say how you want to see it amended?*

I think the appeals decisions have been helpful, but we need a number of amendments that deal with the workings of the tribunals, like for example: to have a mutually agreed chairperson, that is not a lawyer; and we would like to see in both the Sex-Discrimination and Equal Pay Act that the burden of proof is on the employer. We've also been looking at the possibility of some legislation which dealt with the idea of a 'notional man'. This legislation exists in New Zealand and is an attempt to solve one of the big problems for women's pay, resulting from the different jobs that men and women do; the division of labour within industry, which means that three quarters of women who work, work alongside other women and therefore cannot be compared to men.

★ *Do you think a man could do your job?*

Roughly no. I think that they could do sort of 80% of it. But being a woman and experiencing the pressures of the divisions in our society helps you understand women's problems more deeply than a man. And I think you're going to find more ways of helping women. Also women in the union find it easier, quite often, particularly if they've got a problem, to talk to a woman about it. Until things have changed and until a lot more men, inside the movement, have come to terms with the women's rights movement, I think it's safer to have a woman in this kind of job.

#### AUEW - TECHNICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPERVISORY SECTION

Onslow Hall, 13/14a The Green, Richmond, Surrey (01-948 2271)

General Secretary: Ken Gill

Women workers are mainly in the clerical and administrative sections: secretaries, typists; they are also technical workers in engineering: draughtswomen, tracers, technicians.

	men	women
membership	128,895	15,571 (4 years ago 5% of total membership; now 12%)
full-time officials	36	2
executive members	26	1
TUC delegates	14	4



# PAT TURNER

is 49 and a member of the Labour Party. She was appointed National Woman Officer to the General and Municipal Workers Union in 1970, and is a member of the Women's Advisory Committee to the TUC.

**★ When was the job of Woman Officer created in the union?**

It dates from the time when the National Federation Of Women, the only Women's trade union, amalgamated with my union, which was 1922. The National Woman Officer was to maintain a focus on women. Mary McCarthy, who was the secretary of the old National Federation was our first one. She was followed by Margaret Bonfield, who was the first Labour woman cabinet minister. So I have very illustrious predecessors. Mind you, the title is to be deleted from our rule book at our coming conference. We're changing our Women's Department title into an Equal Rights Department, because my union is very concerned about race relations as well.

**★ Has the nature of the job changed a lot since you personally got involved?**

Yes it's become much bigger; the pressures have increased, since the Equal Pay Act; and then International Women's Year. We've got a proliferation now of committees and commissions about women. I sit on so many committees I have lost count.

**★ Don't you get bored by grind committee work?**

Frustrated would be a better word. I'm never bored in the job, I think I can say that in all honesty.

**★ How much of your time do you spend in your job, working for women's rights?**

I would say 40% on women and 60% on my industrial responsibilities.

**★ What did you do before?**

Well, I've had a pretty varied career. I worked for a union from a very early age and then I worked abroad, I came back and began a process of self-education, whilst I was working for the trade union movement.

**★ What union were you working with?**  
The Transport & General Workers' Union. I was assistant to the National Education Officer. Then I got a state scholarship to university and when I came out there was no job and I went into teaching. From there I was seconded to Barbara Castle's Department Of Industry And Productivity. And then I went to the Commission On Industrial Relations and I was quite happy there



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IRL)

"Some socialists are guilty of the same blindness about women as society generally."

until we had a change in government. I was lucky I had the chance to join the GMWU.

**★ Were you particularly interested in joining a union as a full-time official?**

Oh yes, trade unions have always been my interest, maybe because of my background. My family was working class. The women in the family were in the cotton industry up North. My father was a railway man. We were a very strong Labour family as well as trade unionists. My claim is that I have never worked for private industry and I take a great deal of pride in that, perhaps irrationally, but I do.

**★ Were Women's Rights your particular interest before you got this job?**

I'm a socialist and I've been interested in workers' rights, I must confess, because I have never felt in any way circumscribed by sex. And it's really only since I've come into the job and

have made it a specialised field that I have become much more aware.

**★ Do you sometimes feel split loyalties, between being a socialist and a feminist?**

Yes, because sometimes socialists are guilty of the same blindness about women as society generally. So I do feel a split loyalty sometimes. But I still think that in a socialist society, we have a much better chance of getting recognition of women as citizens.

**★ How have you built up your contact with women members. Can they get in touch with you?**

We have a structure that they have to go through: via the branch to the region and then to me. My contact is when we have our Annual and Regional Conferences. I go to all of them. I also go out into the branches. There are women's rights weekend schools. I was at one in Blackpool just before the Women's TUC and I'm going down to



one on Monday. I've now also been able to set out women's courses at our two full-time colleges. In International Women's Year we did a special women's rights course, which was concerned purely with the position of women in Society. But women-only courses are not basic shop steward courses. Oddly enough the idea came from the women themselves. A woman once said to me that one of the difficulties in getting away to a full-time course was that the husbands objected and that it would be easier if they could say they were going on a women's course. Now I don't necessarily subscribe to that view, but my concern is getting our women on training and if that's what they want that's what I try to do.

*★ Why do you say you "don't necessarily subscribe to this"?*

Well because I think we have to fight it within the domestic situation; if husbands are a barrier to participation in the unions, then we have to attack the views of the husbands. I think we're only going to solve women's problems in joint discussion with our brothers. So we also have joint weekend schools.

*★ But I've read some complaints in your Journal that still not enough women go to the courses.*

That's right, there aren't. In our union our regions are very autonomous. All I can do is to impress upon our women that they must take the initiative. Very often our women will say to me "Well I would like to have gone, but I didn't know it was on". But the problem in unions is that all communications come through the branch and if people don't go to the branch, they don't get the information; and if they're not reading the journal then . . . You see, I have to try and persuade our women that if they're going to have any influence, any voice in determining affairs of the union, then the place to do it is at the branch; and that's knowing all the problems about attendance.

*★ Do you think a man could do your job?*

Not yet. Well I'm sure he could in relation to my industrial responsibilities. I don't think in relation . . . maybe

I'm being unfair and generalising. No, I don't think so. I think that at the present time we still need a woman, who can experience subjectively the objective situation she's talking about, and I don't think men are ready for that.

*★ Do you consult with women officials in other unions that have responsibilities for women?*

Well I sit on the TUC Women's Advisory Committee. But it's a fairly formalised structure. I think we could have much more informal contact. I mean the number of times I've made arrangements to meet say Judith Hunt, or Muriel Turner<sup>5</sup> or Rita Stephen<sup>6</sup>. We get it all planned and when it comes, I'm in Scotland, and somebody else is in Liverpool.

*★ How do you cope with having a time-consuming job and being married?*

I hope this doesn't sound a bit odd: I don't think of myself as a married woman; I just live with Donald Turner and we have careers which we pursue. I mean I just don't find marriage some state which requires different kinds of behaviour. If I had children I might be different about it. But that we didn't have a family was a conscious decision, that we both made in the beginning. I'm quite ready to say that in the domestic scene we're both absolutely hopeless. But you know, it's not a need we have.

*★ Doesn't this enviable set-up separate you from rank and file women?*

Yes it does, and this is why I've had to become more aware of the situation. But then I don't spend my time with our women talking about the home situation. I mean I discuss their needs in relation to nurseries and the pressures they have from home etc. but I don't intrude with my own personal view about this.

*★ In your report last year you said there's a disproportionate concentration of women in less skilled and lower paid jobs. What have you done to provide more job training facilities for women?* Well the concept that I'm advocating is the establishment of Equal Opportunity Committees at the local work place,

because I think, if we are going to make positive use of the legislation, then we have to have a mechanism for doing it. It's a traditional trade union way; we already have Job Evaluation Committees, Health and Safety Committees, Pay Committees . . . The Equal Opportunities Committees would cover the race relations legislation as well. The Committee would examine where the women are concentrated, what area of jobs there are available to them, given the training and what kind of training they need. And I've just heard of my one success: an Equal Opportunities Committee set up in one of the factories in Birmingham (Lucas).

*★ What women's issues has the union been fighting for especially?* Obviously equal pay and sex discrimination. Nursery education. Part time working for women because this is something which is necessary to them, and flexible working hours. We've been very active in the abortion campaign. Maternity leave we're seeking to improve and we're also now pressing for paternity leave, realising it's a joint thing.

*★ As so many of the equal pay tribunal results have been disappointing, don't you think that industrial action is a better way of achieving equal pay?* We're taking the line that we should be changing the law. We have a legal officer who has been paying particular concern to the legislation. We put a motion to the TUC this year which was virtually based on the experience we'd had. We want changes, which would curtail the loopholes that the employers are so easy at exploiting. We want class actions and make it easier for women to use legislation. But certainly we have been involved in equal pay strikes. But it seems to me an expensive way because our women are losing money. And if we're going to have legislation let us have effective legislation.

*★ What prospects have you got for the future?*

Well I hope that my job in relation to women is finite. In other words I hope that one day women will be union members full stop. □

#### GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS UNION

Thorne House, Claygate, Esher, Surrey (Esher 62081/5)

General Secretary: David Basnett

Women workers predominantly in local authorities, engineering, chemicals, food and drink, textiles and in the white collar section.

	men	women
membership	592,073	290,283 (increased by half in 10 years)
full-time officials	272	10
executive members	30	—
TUC delegates	64	4

<sup>1</sup> Because this is not a description of the job, but a description of the sex of the person holding that position. This is illegal under the Sex Discrimination Act.

<sup>2</sup> A number of women won their case for equal pay on appeal. Justice Phillips, Employments Appeals Tribunal president, urged tribunals to look at the spirit of the legislation, rather than splitting hairs.

<sup>3</sup> The Trico management had to concede and give the women equal pay after their 21 week strike (see SR53).

<sup>4</sup> The Equal Opportunities Commission are investigating the wages structure at Electrolux (Luton), following the suggestion of Justice Phillips, in order to negotiate a fair wages structure (see SR 57).

<sup>5</sup> Muriel Turner, Assistant General Secretary of ASTMS.

<sup>6</sup> Rita Stephens, executive Secretary at APEX.



# NEWS

## ROME—in solidarity with Claudia Caputi

Last month we received a report from Italy about the massive feminist mobilisation in support of Claudia Caputi, raped in Rome. But at the last minute we were asked not to print it — “There are political maneuvers going on which may be used to the disadvantage of women, and the Italian women’s movement is deciding how to proceed”.

It is now clear that these were “maneuvers to create confusion and disunity among women in their solidarity with a rape victim, and to discredit the campaign through allegations linking the victim to prostitution. These maneuvers have failed.” The trial is now over, some of the rapists are convicted, and Claudia is in hiding. This is the story:

Claudia Caputi was turned into the accused by the institutional violence of the courts and society. In effect, the Italian judicial system is telling all women they will be punished if they follow Claudia’s example and dare to denounce



Thousands demonstrate in front of Rome’s law courts during the gang rape trial, chanting feminist slogans and forming the feminist symbol.

and prosecute rapists. This case shows the political nature of rape and violence as instruments of oppression of women.

### Facts of the case

On 30 August 1976, Claudia Caputi, 17 years old, was gang raped in a field on the outskirts of Rome by 16 neighbourhood boys, one of whom she already knew. She had come to Rome some months earlier from her isolated mountain village in Central Italy (800 inhabitants, 1000 emigres over a 20 year period). She answered an advertisement and got a job as a domestic to a man in a popular neighbourhood of Rome.

Claudia reported the rape to the police. She identified ten boys as rapists but only seven were brought to trial in late March 1977 — the police advised her to withdraw all her accusations “for her own sake”. During this period Claudia was threatened with reprisals and

death by friends and relatives of the accused. Although she identified in the courtroom one of those who had threatened her (the brother of one of the accused) no action was taken against him, nor were any measures taken to protect Claudia.

On 30 March 1977, when the trial had just begun, Claudia was attacked a second time. Shortly after leaving her lawyer, she was forcibly taken by four youths to a field outside Rome, raped and slashed with a razor repeatedly over her breasts, abdomen and legs. She was picked up by passing motorists and taken to hospital in a state of shock.

### From Victim to Accused

Less than three days later the Public Prosecutor, Paolino Dell’Anno, notified Claudia in the hospital that she was being put under investigation for “simulation” of the second rape and for self-infliction of the wounds, and for threatening

a witness at the trial so he would give false testimony. The basis for this incredible action seems to be the testimony of one man who says he gave Claudia a ride in his car at the time she said she was being attacked.

In fact the results of the medical examination show that it is physically impossible that Claudia’s wounds were self-inflicted.

### Feminist Solidarity

From the very beginning, Italian feminists supported Claudia through the ordeal women are subjected to in any rape trial. Defended by a feminist lawyer, Tina Lagostena Bassi, Claudia courageously demanded and was eventually granted open hearings, so the violence against women could be denounced publicly. Feminists also tried to bring a group action against the accused rapists — on the basis that rape is a crime against all women — but this was rejected



# FOREIGN NEWS

by the court.

The day after Claudia was attacked the second time, twenty thousand women took to the streets and marched from the city centre to the area where Claudia lived and where the accused rapists and their friends live and hang out. United in this march, which got enormous publicity, were the various feminist collectives and UDI (Union of Italian Women), the large national organisation of Communist women.

At the hospital, Claudia was guarded day and night by groups of feminists, organising this protection in shifts.

## Counter-offensive

When the hearings resumed on April 4, Claudia's lawyer requested the replacement of the Public Prosecutor, because his attitude throughout the trial demonstrated his complicity with the cultural and ideological values of the accused rapists. When he refused to step down, Claudia's lawyer and the feminists present left the courtroom in protest and joined the thousands of women demonstrating in front of the courthouse.

Communist and socialist MPs raised questions to the Minister of Justice regarding the Public Prosecutor's action. One socialist MP asked the Minister to take disciplinary action against the Public Prosecutor for showing favouritism to the rapists and for prejudicing the case by trying to discredit the raped woman.

## Two Weeks Later We Received This Report:

The trial of the boys who raped Claudia last August has concluded with the conviction of all seven rapists (ed: three youths were sentenced to jail, and four others received conditional sentences — which means they won't go to prison unless convicted of rape again).

Italian feminists are now analysing what has happened and working on future strategy for their campaign against violence, discussing:

— Why and how the efforts to

— The place and effectiveness of mass demonstrations.

— While feminists will continue to mobilise concrete solidarity for rape victims, there is some question about making any particular woman a symbol or *cause celebre*

— An effective political strategy, especially as almost 20 rape cases are scheduled to appear in court in Rome in May alone. One concrete step has already been taken: a collective has formed with representatives from ten feminist collectives in Rome which will work on legal and

seems that the slashing was a "warning" not to tell what she knows of the prostitution racket in Rome.

Apparently her employer was involved in this — the "au pair" job may have been a way of forcing her into it. It was he who claimed she was in his car when she was being attacked the second time. He has now been charged with perjury and convicted.

Last month Claudia's supporters wanted to quiet things down a little until her safety could be assured, and to defeat the efforts to confuse the campaign. She is now out of hospital, her whereabouts unknown but we can assume she's safe.

## What We Can Do

The Italian women's movement asks us to send information about political, legal and other actions taken by women against rape and violence and in support of raped women in our countries. Materials in any language will be helpful. If possible send two copies, one for a permanent collection, one for circulation, to ISIS, Via della Pelliccia 31, Rome, Italy. They say, "The international support and solidarity for Claudia and the whole campaign so far has been tremendous! Thank you." □ Most information in this article is from Marilee Karl of ISIS (the women's international information and communication service). Thanks also to Ornella Moscucci.

## PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE WOMENS MOVEMENT IN ROME, 18/4/77

We would like to denounce publicly the attempt made by the establishment to lay on us the age old sexist trap: A RAPED WOMAN = A PROSTITUTE and A PROSTITUTE = A RAPEABLE WOMAN, a particularly serious attempt just now when the feminist movement is growing so rapidly, in that it is intentionally aimed at discrediting the movement in the eyes of all women and alienating them from it. This is what is happening to Claudia Caputi whose story has been manipulated in such a way as to suggest that the crime of rape committed against her is meaningless and at the same time to confuse women, isolating them in their given roles as mother, wife, sister, virgin or prostitute.

Rape is a political crime and any raped woman is raped independently of her social role.

create confusion were organised. This happened at a time when the organised left joined the feminists in solidarity with Claudia, recognising rape as a political crime. Not only the Communist women's organisation but the leftist press and political leaders on the left came out openly in support of feminism.

political measures together with feminist lawyers; first it will try to make group actions in rape cases legally possible.

## More On The Allegations

It's not surprising for any raped woman to be labelled a prostitute — as the myth goes, she must have asked for it. In Claudia's case, it now

## Marie Murray jailed for life

Marie Murray, sentenced to death in Dublin last year convicted of murdering a policeman after a bank robbery in October 1975, has been retried in the Special Criminal Court (no jury) and jailed for life on the reduced conviction of non-capital murder.

She and her husband Noel would have been the first to hang in Southern Ireland since capital punishment was abolished for most murder cases in 1964. Noel's sentence was reduced to life without a retrial.

Marie always said she had been tortured mentally and Noel physically to get statements from them. She was held in virtual isolation in a top security wing of Limerick Jail.

Defence groups formed in

many countries to protest this political victimisation — both Murrys had been involved in the Republican Movement, the Irish language movement and in action on housing, and define themselves as anarchist revolutionaries. □

## SOUTH AFRICA The dreaded words red and black

*Some issues of Spare Rib have — hardly surprisingly — being banned in South Africa. A sister from Cape Town reports:*

Aside from a handful of feminists with overseas connections who subscribe to it, no-one here

has ever heard of SR. So we were mystified to read recently in the *Cape Argus* that the October and November issues of last year's SR (ed: including 'Letter from a South African Sister' supporting the Soweto students, and a feature on Asian reactions to racism in Britain) had been banned, making their distribution illegal. But it is not an offence to possess a copy of those two issues if you have one already.

When some publications are banned, a special government gazette may also make their possession illegal. Offenders can be prosecuted, as in the most recent case involving a group of priests who have been collecting, producing and distributing eye-witness accounts of how the riot police instigated Christmas-time 'clashes' between migrant workers and residents in Cape Town's Black 'townships' which left up to 20 dead. Five people have been charged with producing, spread-

ing and possessing 'undesirable literature'.

## Wide Net

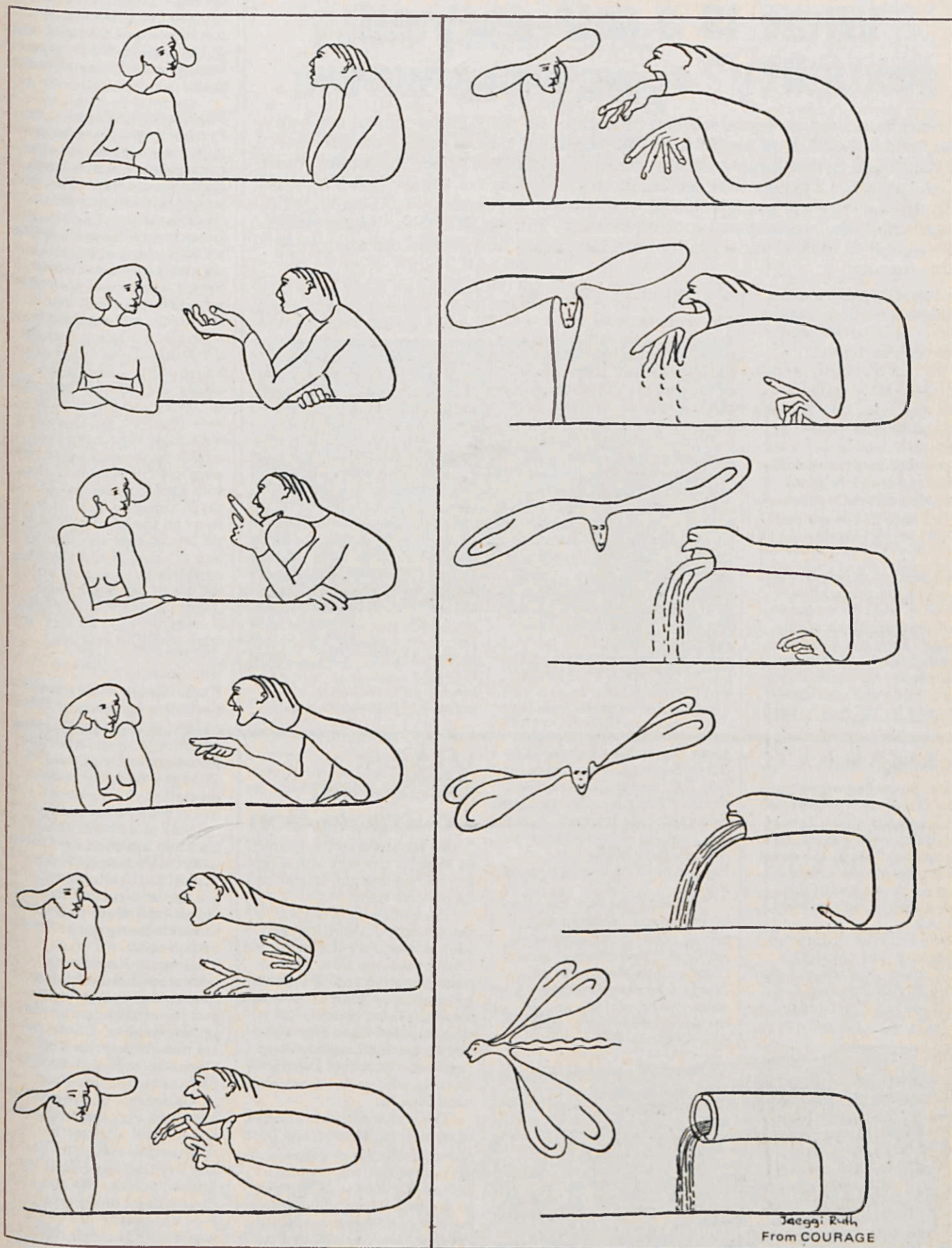
How did the Publications Control Board get hold of SR? Presumably the very efficient overseas tracking operation of the SA Information Service have time, money and staff to police any literature which frustrates their desperate attempts to 'protect' SA from 'liberalistic', 'communitic' and other fearsome corruptions. This means the proscription of any material defying apartheid and an outmoded Calvinist morality.

Censorship covers books (and/or their covers), mags, movies, posters, T-shirts, records (and their covers) and local publications which threaten the 'security of the state'.

In SA the clenched fist is outlawed, and a punishable ►

More foreign news p. 22







## What IS a self-defined sexuality? — ONE DAY WORKSHOP

A one-day workshop on sexual self-determination and the fight to control our own bodies, held in London on April 24, was the second of a series of four on different topics organised by the local feminist socialist network. More than 250 women came to it, and at least 12 papers were presented on a wide range of topics: abortion, rape, prostitution, contraception, lesbianism, women's aid, psychoanalysis, therapy, sexuality and capitalism, male sexual control, sexuality and the left. These papers reflected an attempt to look at our sexuality both historically and in terms of what we're fighting for now.

One starting point was that sexuality is a relatively neglected area of organisation within the women's movement, despite the fact that many women get involved because they are fed up with being treated as sex objects. Although the movement's sixth demand is for an end to discrimination against lesbians and the right of all women to a self-defined sexuality, we have not developed ways of putting this into practice.

This workshop helped clarify some of the central issues involved — what do we mean by self-determination of our sexuality? how can we organise around this? how are our sexual needs and expectations formed inside and outside the family and by the requirements

of a capitalist economy?

One recurrent issue was that of defining our sexuality — what is "it"? What turns us on (some people objected to this mode of expression) and where do our fantasies come from? It was generally agreed that there isn't an essential or natural female sexuality hidden under the layers of repression we're subjected to, but that even our deepest and most private feelings are socially determined. There were tentative ideas of how we would like to reconstruct our sexuality — more integrated with other forms of affection and sensuality, free of images of domination and submission, and of performance criteria. There was a need for new female images and fantasies, both hetero- and homosexual, expressed through

feminist art, music and writing. Many women wanted to engage again in guerilla activities (like the protests against the Miss World contests several years ago), particularly against films of sexual violence and against sexual harassment on the streets.

### Sexual Connections

The National Abortion Campaign came in for a lot of criticism for failing to bring out the connections between abortion and sexuality (a connection the right wing always make in their propaganda) for fear of losing respectability. The absence of any workshop on sex education was seen as reflecting the lack of activity in spreading information about sexuality, especially with adolescent girls. Although it's really difficult to talk about

sexuality publicly, we should learn to do so, because the privatisation of sexuality is one of the ways in which ignorance, fear and reactionary attitudes grow.

### Psychoanalysis Popular

Psychoanalysis was a surprisingly popular subject, but the discussions were mostly confusing. Partly people were interested in several different psychoanalytic theories (those of Freud, Reich, Lacan) and once again we didn't solve the problems of talking about quite specialised theory when those present have very different amounts of knowledge and confidence.

In the workshop I was in the problem was not even acknowledged. Also we didn't clarify the different approaches to theory and practice that were involved. Some women were most concerned with criticising the way psychoanalysis is used in practice; some with exploring the use of psychoanalytic ideas of repression and the unconscious as an aid to confronting our internalised oppression and changing ourselves now, and others with the use of psychoanalytic theory to study how femininity is constructed, with no explicit relationship to practice.

### Why Socialist?

What was specifically socialist about this conference? Partly

### More foreign news...

offence. So is the peace sign. *The Communist Manifesto* and Lenin's *State and Revolution* rank alongside so-called 'pornographic' stuff, the cover of Desmond Morris's *Naked Ape* and anything with the dreaded words 'red' or 'black' in its title.

Some feminist writing can be obtained, but not the *Female Eunuch*, *Women and Madness* by Phyllis Chessler, and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*. Also banned are

some key books on rape, like Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*, and B. Toner's *The Facts of Rape* is under embargo (ie likely to be banned). You can't get Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* or Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*.

Typically the PCB has allowed the release of Jacopetti's brutal, sadistic and fabricated *Africa Addio* because it confirms a racist stereotype of Blacks whereas cross-race sex is outlawed (in real life and on the silver screen) as a 'danger to race relations'. □

## URUGUAY Outlawing contraception

A law proposed to the Council of State in Uruguay will severely limit the use and sale of contraceptives there.

The birth rate is falling, so the military authorities, who took power after the economic crisis of the late 60's, plan to pass legislation to force women to have more children. It would also help them counter the depopulation caused by many people leaving Uruguay every year — it's probably the one country with as many members outside as in.

The legislation bans the use of contraceptives and any form of birth control propaganda. To get contraceptives, a woman will need a doctor's certificate to say that having children seriously endangers her health. Penalties for breaking this law will be jail sentences of six months to two years, and fines of 100 to 1000 dollars.

This state manipulation of their fertility would be disastrous for women, for whom

contraception and abortion have been easily accessible. Though a Catholic country, the separation of church and state in 1919 and subsequent development of a liberal democratic tradition has condoned birth control. Contraceptives can be bought at the chemist and the pill has been on sale since 1963. An estimated one in five women of childbearing age in Uruguay uses the pill.

Uruguay has been rated underpopulated for a long time (population is three million) and the average family has one or two children. Contraceptives are most widely used in Montevideo, the capital, where almost half the population lives.

Opponents of the proposed law argue that the birth rate is not directly attributable to contraceptive use, and that the law will lead to a rise in unwanted pregnancies and abortions. (Legal limits on abortion have apparently not so far been suggested.) It seems likely that the law will be passed, as the military regime appoints and backs both the presidential figurehead and the Council of State. □

Sue Sharpe

Thanks to Inter Press Service

IN WHAT must be this year's prize-winning entry for recklessness and candour in public places, a senior State Department official has said the U.S. is seeking to provide the means to sterilise a quarter of all third World women, in part to protect the interests of American business overseas. The official is Dr. R. T. Ravenholt, Director of the U.S. Office of Population, an agency of the State Department, whose job is to create the medical technology needed to render out 100,000,000 women in the developing countries incapable of having children. Known as "advanced fertility management," the programme is expected to be complete in nine years. Population control, said Dr. Ravenholt in an interview, is needed to maintain "the normal operation of U.S. commercial interests around the world. If the population explosion proceeds unchecked, said Dr. Ravenholt, it will cause such terrible economic conditions abroad that revolutions will ensue. And revolutions, he suggested, are scarcely ever beneficial to the interests of the United States.

EVENING STANDARD, MAY 11.



our concern to criticise the left for ignoring sexuality, or pushing it aside as a "woman's question". More positively, our attempt to understand historically the relationship between the economic and political structures of our society and our sexual experiences. We looked at how different phases of capitalism have corresponded to different ways of controlling our sexuality (how Victorian repression and puritanism have developed into present day consumerist exploitation of sex), and how this is related to the way women's roles as child-bearers and servicers of workers have changed.

There was also the assumption — which didn't go unchallenged — that although what many women experience is sexual violence from men, it is not men who are the primary enemy, but the kind of class society that produces such violence. It would have been helpful if there'd been more discussion of the dilemma this puts some women in — of struggling personally against particular men within particular relationships, of dealing with day-to-day hassles on the street and at work, yet not wanting to direct all their energies against men in general.

Equally there should have been more discussion of how we see personal change relating to social change, of the priorities people make in this respect. This surfaced as a tension in many discussions.

The class basis of the women's movement — largely middle class in origin, allowing us space to try out different relationships and lifestyles is important here, but wasn't sufficiently brought out, even in discussions around activities such as Women's Aid and the Rape Crisis Centre, or prostitution, which also involve women with very different backgrounds and identifications. □

Joanna Ryan

For details of the next two workshops, see Shortlist.

## 'Not just the same old gang'

Women on the Newport Women's Studies Course (sponsored by Cardiff University Extra Mural Department) have decided to form a women's liberation group in Newport, now that the course has come to an end after 20 weeks of meeting together to discuss the position of women in society.

The 12 to 18 women who regularly attended are all interested in getting the group off the ground. Jane Hutt of Cardiff Women's Liberation asked two of them what they had got out of the course:



Celebrating the beginning of a new women's group

Arlene & Ann

CATHERINE TUDOR

Dilys: "It was advertised in the press, but most of the group heard of the sessions by word of mouth. Oddly enough though, at the first meeting we didn't just see the same old gang. . .

"It seemed that here was the ideal opportunity to get to know more about women's issues without feeling left out of a clique or that I was being asked to commit myself to a group without the right to question their arguments."

Iona (who co-ordinated the course): "Though I attended the first Women's Liberation Conference in Oxford I never joined a women's group. Over the years I kept up to date

with literature coming out of the movement but most of it was left on the shelf — it's amazing how different reading becomes when you've got to explain or discuss the issues with someone else . . .

"For me the group has been very important in helping me analyse my position and that of women in general. I think I held the views instinctively before but now I have more confidence in standing up for them and hope that through this confidence I'll be able to encourage other women who are going through this process."

Another exciting thing to come out of the course has been a teenage girls club in a local community. It's been

meeting weekly since October, proving popular partly because other youth activities locally cater more for boys than girls.

There has been discussion about setting up a women's centre in the town, with a playgroup and an information service, but mainly as a meeting-place for Newport women. Plans are afoot to develop local campaigns on abortion and nursery provisions, and several women from the course have now joined Newport Women's Aid.

Only two of the women on the course had been involved in the women's movement before. Dilys says:

"This atmosphere of being able to question without fear of looking silly or being seen as 'going against the movement' has continued. Having had the opportunity to enter the women's debate without these worries and feeling decidedly unthreatened now by the idea of some great unyielding mass known as 'the women's movement' — I am looking forward to learning and developing further with old friends and hope that new friends will find it just as easy as I did to join in." □

So another women's group is on the map! Contact Jitka German, Flat 3, 11 Clytha Square, Newport (phone Newp. 216121).

## Stabbing out lesbianism

"I thought that British justice would prevail in the end" said Stanley Jackson, as he was cleared from a charge of maliciously wounding and stabbing his wife's lover with intent to cause grievous bodily harm.

Jackson stated he "never despaired all through the trial". Any self-respecting "father of two, determined to save his 16-year old marriage" would have been confident. He had been "shattered, degraded and humiliated" and had been incredibly patient before he threw his "little tantrum": objecting to his wife's "lesbian affair", this mild housefather decided to scare her lover — he went to her house and stabbed her.

After his acquittal Jackson claimed he bore no grudges against his wife's lover. "Now I will just try to pick up the pieces of my life." Jackson is still hoping to 'save' his marriage, but his wife has other plans and intends to live with her lover. □

What did you learn in school today, dear?



Kinesis





## Talks-Conferences

**Women & Work 1977**  
28 May. Conference at the YWCA, Great Russell St, London WC1. Intended particularly for women in trade unions. Topics include recent legislation affecting women at work, ghettos of women's work, courses for women workers by the Workers' Educational Association. Details from Lucy Mannheim or Fred Osborne at the WEA, 32 Tavistock Square, London WC1.

**Talking With Women**  
28 May. 10am-4.30pm; 7-9pm conference in Knightswood Community Centre, Alderman Rd, Glasgow G13. "Of interest to those connected with community projects, discussion groups and TV education involving women, as well as

those in further and adult education." Bring handouts, course out-lines, video tapes, references. Creche and accommodation, coffee and buffet lunch provided. Cost £1.20 (50p claimants). Registration: Jenny Beale, Alison West, WEA, 212 Bath St, Glasgow G2 4HW (041-332 0176)

**Women's Liberation Conference 1978**  
28 May. Planning meeting 1pm at the Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12 (Birmingham 449 2931). Entertainment in the evening. Women from all over the country are invited. Inform the centre if you need accommodation, creche.

**Paris International Socialist Women's Conference**  
May 28-30. "Aimed at women active in various struggles (equal pay, redundancy, women's aid, rape, community

struggles...)" Papers welcome, particularly on Women's Aid refuges, as the French and Italian sisters are attempting to set up refuges. Donations, offers of help, papers as soon as possible to the Planning Group, Michael Ann Mullen, 7 Archibald Rd, London N7.

**Women in Guinea Bissau**  
30 May. 6.30 talk at the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Rd, London N19 NG (01-837 0041). Speaker: Stephanie Urdang (one of the editors of *Southern Africa*).

**Women Workers In Britain In World War 1**  
3 June. Talk 7.30pm at the Women's Research And Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Speaker: Marion Rozak. Organised by the Feminist History Group, 18 Lillieshall Rd, London SW4.

**Amsterdam International Feminist Socialist Workshops**  
3-5 June. This Conference is being planned as a result of "an unfortunate difference of opinion which occurred" during one of the planned meetings for the Paris conference, as above. "No feminism without socialism; no socialism without feminism": every woman, who is interested in this broad theme, is welcome. Donations, offers of help, papers as soon as possible to Babara Yates, 20B Batoum Gardens, London W6.

**Yorkshire Women's Conference**  
4 June. At the Textile Hall, Bradford. "The main purpose of the conference is to bring together women from different parts of Yorkshire and to find out what they are involved in". Details from Claire Valentine, 31 Woodview, Bradford 8 (Bradford 497548).

**Rape**  
7 June. Meeting 8pm at the Big Flame Office, 14A Piccadilly, Manchester. Organised by the Manchester Women & Socialism Group. Contact Nuala Morton, Flat 1, 158

Arts Centre. "Something like a hundred musicians will be taking part, and they have two things in common — they regard themselves as socialists and want to bring their craft and politics closer together". Also discussions, a section for children, practical workshops, an exhibition, books and records, refreshments, and a creche. Tickets £1.50 from Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, London SW11.

**Working Women's Festival**  
11-12 June. At Matlock Bath Pavilion, Matlock, Derbyshire. The festival will be mixed but planners and entertainers are women. Exhibitions, films,

# Short

Chorley New Rd, Bolton (Bolton 44539).

**Women's Work In London Between The Wars**  
10 June. Talk 7.30pm at the WRRRC as above. Speaker: Sally Alexander. Organised by the Feminist History Group as above.

**Women In Iran**  
14 June. Talk 6.30pm at the Institute Of Race Relations, 247/249 Pentonville Rd, London N1. Details from Jenny (01-837 0041).

**The Family & Social Security**  
17 June. Talk 7.30pm at the WRRRC as above. Speaker: Hilary Land (Dep. Of Social Administration, Bristol University).

**Race**  
21 June. Meeting 8pm at the Big Flame Office, Manchester as above.

**Women Against Rape**  
23 June. Meeting 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Speakers from Women Against Rape, the Feminist Movement in Italy, Black Women For Wages For Housework (New York), and battered women's hostels. Contact (01-452 1338) if you need creche facilities.

**The Suffrage Movement**  
25 June. Dayschool 10-4 at the London School Of Economics, St Clements Building (Room S101A), Houghton St, London WC2. For anyone working on or interested in aspects of the Suffrage Movement. Details from Jean McCrindle, 124 de Beauvoir Rd, London N1 (01-254 4184).

**Feminism & Ireland**  
26 June. Socialist Feminist conference at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Details from the planning group c/o 13 Malfort Rd, London SE5.

## Campaigns

**Abortion**  
30 May. Meeting for non-aligned feminists who are/ would like to be involved in the National Abortion Campaign, to discuss future plans. Contact Angela (01-720 4448) or Dorothy (01-485 7920).

**Sixth Demand In The Midlands**  
11-12 June. Meeting in Nottingham on the Sixth Demand of the Women's Liberation Movement: 'An end to discrimination against lesbians and the right of all

women to a self-defined sexuality'. Send your thoughts to the Nottingham Women's Liberation Newsletter, 46 Burford Rd, Nottingham.

**Wages For Housework**  
Mid June. Wilmette Brown of Black Women For Wages For Housework (formerly Black Panther Party) will be speaking at two public meetings. Details of time and place from (01-452 1338 or 01-459 1150).

## Fun & Music

**Socialist Festival Of Music**  
28 May. 10 to late at Battersea

theatre, children's events. Bring tents. Tickets 50p per session (three sessions in all). Details from Pat Maclardy, 4 Rutland Ave, Matlock, Derbyshire (0629-55677).

**People's Jubilee**  
19 June. At Alexandra Palace, Muswell Hill, London. The Women's Movement events of this Communist Party celebration include: music: Saffron Summerfield, Toni Arthur and women's groups; film: *EGA Stays OK* (see reviews), *Union Maids* by an American collective; art: including works from the women exhibiting in 'The World As We See It' (see SR 58); discussion and talks on



# Publications

feminism and socialism; stalls; creche and events for children. Tickets £2 whole day and evening; pensioners £1; children 50p; evening only £1.50. Details from the CP, 16 King St, London WC2 (01-836 2151).

## Projects

### Socialist Feminism

A Hackney group meets every two weeks. Contact Ruth (01-986 5861 day) or Sandy (01-986 7010 evenings).

### Lesbianism

A new lesbian social group for North Wales has started. Contact the Lesbian Group c/o Students Union ULR, Deiniol Rd, Bangor.

## Plays

### Care & Control

A Gay Sweatshop play "based on the experiences of lesbian mothers in their fight for custody of their children... A Woman is suspect in the eyes of the state when she asserts her right to live independently of men. She is seen as a direct challenge to family life and the traditional sexual roles which the courts uphold". They are performing throughout the country in June. Contact Gay Sweatshop (01-673 5992) for dates and places.

### Vinegar Tom

Performed by Monstrous Regiment, written by Caryl Churchill and directed by Pam Brighton, *Vinegar Tom* is set in 17th century England and looks at people's history through women's eyes. 2-4 June. At Aston University Arts Centre, Birmingham. 8 June. At Beaford Centre, Beaford, Winkleigh, N.Devon. 9-11 June. At Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff.

### Shadow Women II

5 June. Live event with film in the evening at ACME Gallery, 43 Shelton St, London WC2.

### Mme Truesoul

"Black White And Red explores the masks political, social, sexual, etc., which women need in order to survive but which slowly erode them inside". 20-25 June. 1pm at Kings Head, 115 Upper St, London N1.

## Publications

### Women's Liberation News

There will be no more issues due to lack of woman power and money. "Only those women who have subscribed very recently will be getting some money back (coming out of our own pockets)". Details and queries: 20B Batoum Gardens, London W6.

### Humpty Dumpty No. 8

The latest issue of the radical psychology magazine explores the relationship between politics and therapy. It includes a comprehensive interview with the founders of the Women's Therapy Centre, two personal accounts of political conflicts within growth movement groups, a description of the different varieties of Co-counselling around, a discussion with two women in Red Therapy and an article by the People's Aid and Action Centre describing their work and criticising Women's Aid. Pity W.A. weren't given space to reply more fully. Then there's news, reviews and a scattering of irreverent cartoons. Recommended. Available at 30p + postage from 32 Parkholme Rd, London E8.

R.P.

### Fireweed

"A quarterly magazine publishing work of a high standard by unknown as well as established writers and artists, whose work is of particular interest to working people, socialists and others interested in the arts". They welcome contributions from women for their coming women's issue. Contact Susie Roth, 107 Bowerham Rd, Lancaster (Lanc. 66893).

### Prostitutes Publish

PROS, the Birmingham group of prostitutes, social workers and lawyers, campaigning to change the soliciting laws, have published their first bulletin (April). It gives details of the group's programme, how the campaign is spreading, and the government's proposals to tighten the law on soliciting. Copies from PROS c/o The Birmingham Peace Centre, 18 Moor St, Ringway, Birmingham (021-643 0996); 10p + postage.

### Country Women

A duplicated, feminist newsletter, out three or four times a year, for women in isolated, rural areas. Each issue is produced by a small group of women from one of these areas and costs £1 for four issues. The current newsletter is being put together by Sue, Lynn and Jenny at The Old Post Office, Winterslow, Salisbury, Wilts. (Winterslow

862057). More than half the subs have not been renewed and the newsletter is in danger of collapsing. It is very important for isolated women to have a network of support, and information about sisters in similar circumstances. Please send articles, contributions and subs to the above address.

### Mothers in Employment

a 141 page pamphlet containing seven papers from a conference on Mother In Employment: Trends and Issues (Brunel Univ May 76). "Between 1961 and 1971 the proportion of women with a preschool child and who went out to work increased by over 60%...". The pamphlet provides up to date facts and figures; discusses issues raised by the increase; and shows, by reviewing the current benefits and provisions, how government, employers as well as trade unions have virtually ignored "mothers in employment".

Available from Brunel University Management Programme, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex. Price £1.95.

### The Great Child Benefits Robbery

A detailed critique of "the mouse of a scheme that the government finally delivered" (it started on April 4): 30p is the total gain for most families. The pamphlet also compares the scheme with that of other European countries and goes into the history of Child Benefits. It exposes the inadequacy of the current scheme by showing how much it costs to raise children. Guess who bears the burden?

*The Great Child Benefit Robbery*, 30p + 10p postage, from the Child Benefits Now Campaign, c/o 1 Macklin St, London WC2.

## Art

### Women Artists Collective

The collective have taken a small room at the Women's Arts Alliance to re-establish their slide collection/information centre. They intend to remain autonomous while at the same time complementing the activities that go on at the Alliance. The collection will include slides of past and present women artists. Any woman who wants to join in the meetings and discussions or who would like her slides to be included is welcome. Contact the WAA (01-935 1814).

### Feministo - Postal Event

From 20 June. Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London SW1 of the artworks, that women have been sending to each

other, communicating their anger, sadness, cynicism at being a housewife. "Please would all women who have been making and sending artworks in this Postal Event, send the works they have received to Phil Goodall, 14 Valentine Rd, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14, by May 31."

### Women's International Art Club

11 June - 12 July. At the Woodlands Art Gallery, 90 Mycenae Rd, London SE3 (open: weekdays 10-7.30; closed on Wed; Sat 10-6; Sun. 2-6). The club "was formed in 1899... to allow women artists to exhibit their work in public... Paintings, drawings and sculptures by about 50 members of the WIAC are shown in this large exhibition, which is representative of the best work of women artists today".



Awakening by Nenne van Dijk.

Kx! Clerkenwell Close, London EC1



Bouncing Back With Benyon, a new feminist satire, is doing the rounds of National Abortion Campaign meetings, battered women's refuges, colleges and trade union meetings all over England and Wales. It's very funny and vicious, shouting woman-hating lines with an anger and humour that dares the audience to accept them. With *Diane Lambert* as chorus, quoting anti-abortionists from the sidelines, the show is written and acted by *Eileen Fairweather* and *Melissa Murray*, ex-convent schoolfriends who have looned together for years. *Jill Nicholls* asked them why they thought it was important to do a play like this now.

E: Even if Benyon's Bill isn't voted on soon, it — or another anti-abortion Bill — could still get through. This play is deliberately aggressive to make people worry.

M: We're directing it at what you could call a vanguard audience — people who make all the right noises but don't actually turn out on the marches, use the petitions, work for the campaign. We want to make them come forward and do something. Later we plan another run, to a more general audience.

E: Many people see abortion as a side issue, but we see it as central. We're trying to put abortion in a context sexually as well as politically — bringing up men's fear of our sexuality.

J: *The jokes people liked most were very specifically about men and women, and about sex.*

("We believe in the good old days, when men were men, and women were confused, and we all knew where we were.") But in the discussion afterwards when I saw it in West London, the only mention of the play was that "As the play showed, abortion is closely linked with the cuts so we can't just campaign around abortion, we have to fight hospital closures and the social contract" and off and away into real politics. That was all there in the play,

\*Lines in bold type indicate quotations from the play



## **"The trouble with you Women's Libbers is you've got no sense of humour" — STROPPY NEW SATIRE**

but what was stronger was the connection with our sexuality.

M: People do discuss it in the pub after, the women usually very positively, the men more nervously. If there are men in the audience we act more aggressively, it gets the adrenalin going. One guy, a teacher at a union meeting said, "Well, er, you very correctly locate abortion in a class analysis (which we do) but you also appear to be getting at men in some way . . . "But it's the last thing on our minds, to get at our brothers . . . !

E: You know that joke about durex —

"Then there are those women who make men wear things on their thingies. As my husband says — it's like making love in a wellington boot!" —

Women put up with so much to do with contraception, without question, even now, even feminists. In that *SR* article on the cap, women dismissed the sheath; they'll say "I don't like it" or "my boyfriend doesn't like it", yet they'll put up with really bad side effects themselves. You get defensive

◀ "We think that — sex — is a beautiful thing; sacred even — the most wonderful thing that God gave to men" — spoofing SPUC.

reactions from men, and that's good — they've had it thrown in their face. They laugh at the play, but they're squirming at the same time — after all, they've probably all helped get a woman pregnant at some time.

### **Feminist humour**

E: Some of them say the humour's too "advanced feminist," but it works well with women who are not yet consciously feminist. We had a really good response at one refuge, they're going to start a NAC group now — because they know all these things, and they know the humour, it's the inverted humour that women and blacks and all oppressed peoples have.

J: *I liked it much better than the sketch Pirate Jenny did at the Abortion Rights Tribunal, where the man got all the laughs and the woman was caricatured working class, quite embarrassing.*

M: That's one reason why we change accents so much — we didn't want to identify only as 'working class'. We kept shifting, we didn't want to be 'characters' — we become nuns, Sherlock Holmes, Bruce Forsyth, so that people don't have something nice and easy to latch on to. We wanted to dramatise the oppression of women without showing the usual stereotype of cowering victim; we wanted to show women being strong.

E: We also aim the play at people who say they're on our side but still have doubts from their Christian, anti-sexual upbringing which says abortion is horrible —

M: women are horrible!

E: — and murder. It was hard to know whether to deal with the question of abortion as murder. We decided to, just to shock people out of sitting on that fence.

J: *The scene where you discuss methods of backstreet abortion is pretty disturbing.*

M: If we were just funny and aggressive it would become anaesthetic, so we talk about plastic flower stems and blood poisoning very chattily, as if we were discussing the price of carrots at the supermarket.

E: Someone said working class men couldn't take this because they're squeamish about women's bodies — they don't want to know about hysterectomies and periods.

M: Don't make a fuss, that's



what I say — if you're going to suffer, do it quietly, and don't come bleeding on my carpet.  
**J:** *Do you think some audiences might miss the irony? I heard you discussing whether to show it to a group of 16 year old school girls.*

**M:** We are dubious because the play can be misunderstood; it requires a lot of concentration. We've only ever done excerpts as street theatre — it's dangerous with satire, passers-by might get the wrong idea. We've had one incident where a Palestinian who could hardly speak English sat through the entire play thinking we were anti-abortion. He very courageously came up at the end and challenged us. We had to spend half an hour explaining that we weren't against abortion or gays or blacks.

## Breeding machines

**E:** We're careful not to joke about race. We can say "Battered women? We should be so lucky!" but don't feel able to make the same kind of jokes about blacks, because we're not black ourselves.  
**M:** But we do bring up racism, because we put abortion in the context of the right-wing movement generally. The whole idea

of women as breeding machines brings you very close to fascism, where some women have to breed and others are forcibly sterilised. That's already happening to black women in Britain.

**J:** *Do you get asked if you're attacking sexism or 'the system'?*

**E:** Sometimes. Our answer is — both; because they're totally intertwined — it isn't an either/or. The bourgeoisie benefits from all the ways we are oppressed, even where it takes a very personalised form, like sexual unhappiness in marriage — economics underlie that too. We're the most expendable group because we don't 'produce' anything, only children!

**M:** and who wants children! "I mean you've got to help the export drive — And you can't export your old sick granny."

## Self-Oppression

**J:** *In the play you express guilt and shame, yet in an aggressive way that undermines the content. You seem to be saying that women are masochistic, yet they're not really — are you implying it's just a surface response that doesn't go very deep?*

**M:** These internalised forms

of oppression co-exist with a gut knowledge that they're rubbish. For instance, in male company women might say, "Oh I'm against abortion", but the minute the guy leaves the room they'll hesitate, maybe say they've had one. We say really self-hating things — "We're so repulsive, we should be grateful men even want to oppress us" — but when I shout that I as a woman am disgusting, my teeth are clenched; I can do it from the gut, as those are things I've internalised about myself and my sexuality, yet I know they're not right — that tension gives us immense energy.

**J:** *But a lot of women are actively against abortion, not just middle class women either, as might appear from the play.*

**E:** The working class women in SPUC are mainly Catholic — it's hard to go against the Church. But they recognise what it means to have too many kids, to give birth in rotten conditions, and a lot of them know about backstreet abortion. They use contraceptives and have abortions, but do so with immense guilt. Many women's defence is not to feel sexual, then you don't have to get pregnant. Frigidity is a way out, the only contraception available.

## Growing up Catholic

**J:** *You were both brought up Catholic weren't you?*

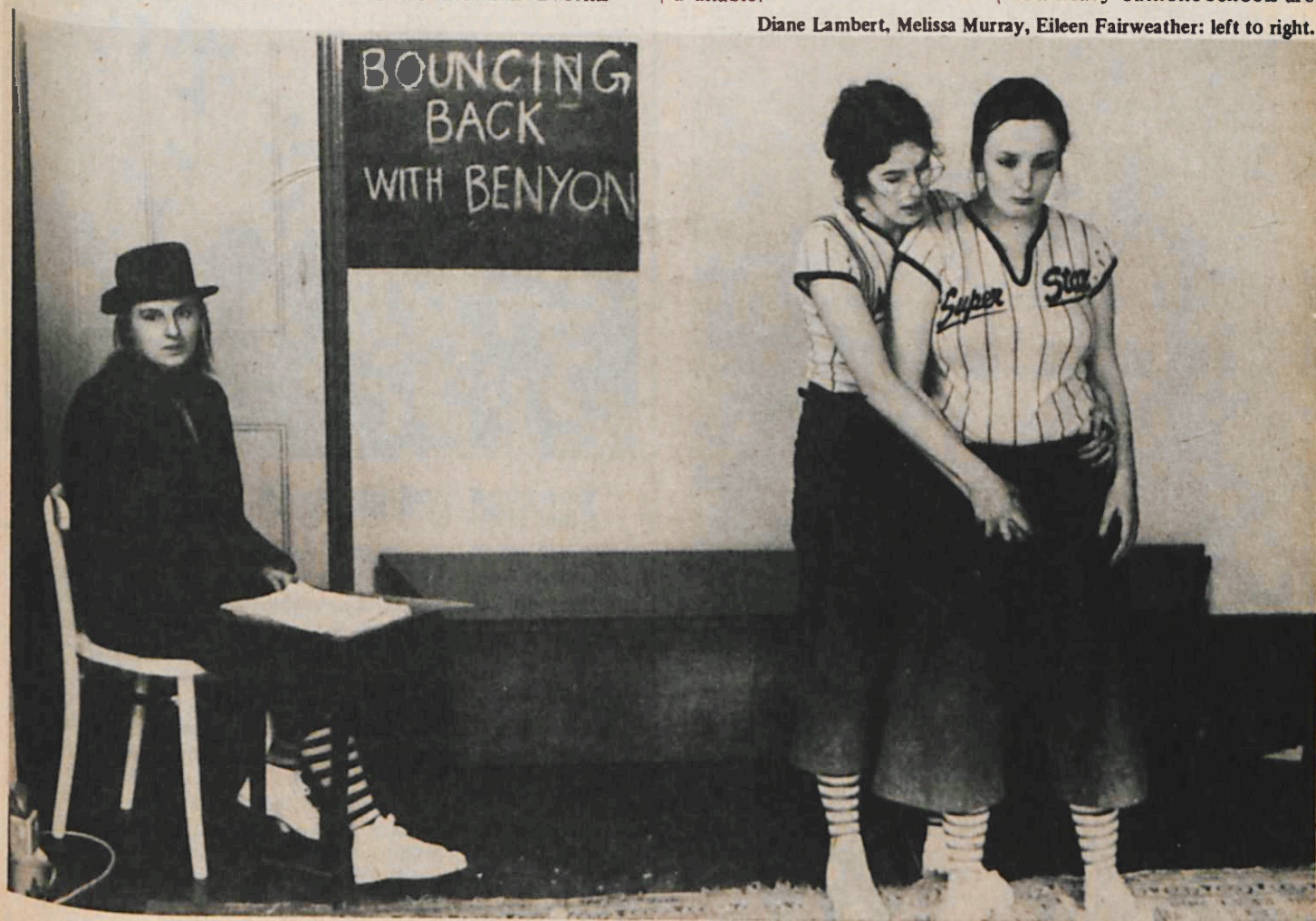
**M:** We were at convent grammar school together from the age of eleven. She was a Catholic till she was eighteen; I gave up and became a Maoist at thirteen on the grounds that I'd support anyone who was against Catholicism. They threw me out at sixteen as a "disruptive and corruptive influence" — she was head girl and nearly became a nun!

**E:** I was only head girl because for the first time there was an election, and Melissa rigged it; anyway I got the sack after five months. I'd got into being a kind of Christian communist. I suggested a sex education programme —

**M:** We'd only ever read *My Dear Daughter*, which said you should never touch your body except for purposes of hygiene; I didn't even know you could touch it for any other purpose when I was sixteen.

**E:** We weren't allowed to mention contraception, abortion, homosexuality. Sex education was OK as long as it was about not having sex, about wifely duties and male/female psychology, they were keen on that. Some people don't believe just how heavy Catholic schools are —

Diane Lambert, Melissa Murray, Eileen Fairweather: left to right.



MARK RUSHER (IFL)



and how docile the kids are.

M: We thought we were rebels, but we accepted the system — our only defence was being funny, talking about blue spaghetti. We were very close, yet I couldn't say straight to Eileen "I'm feeling so bad, I can't cope".

E: We had no answer to give each other anyway.

M: At eighteen I'd already been in mental hospital once for three months — when I got out I came to London. I started to have an epileptic fit, I'd never had one before and hadn't a clue what was happening. We were in a cafe — the tables were moving, everything was going, I thought this time I'm really blowing it, I'm going mad.

E: Four strong men and me to hold her down. I didn't want her to go in the bin again so I rang for a cab to take her home. It was just jokes and jokes to keep her down. She was hallucinating so we went through our whole 'Trouble up 't' mill routine'.

M: Tap dancing, singing and doing Shirley Temple impressions. It was the only way I could keep a grip on reality. The devil was literally coming through the ceiling at me. Somehow the humour kept me together.

E: Our humour was very black then, with a vicious edge, but usually directed against ourselves. We knew we didn't fit in, but didn't know who or what else to blame. We didn't get on with boys, we weren't feminine enough — I much more played feminine than Melissa did, I used to wear makeup and high heeled shoes.

M: I could never do that, I always felt like a drag queen.

E: I used to make a lot of jokes about my body.

J: *You do now too — in the play you joke about femininity, drawing attention to your breasts — people laugh nervously, they're used to seeing that used against women, and not used to seeing women touching themselves or each other.*

E: At seventeen we both used our tits as a joke, but

defensively. Mine are huge —

M: and I felt inadequate because I'm flat chested.

## Body language

E: It's amazing how our body language has changed — Melissa used to walk like an ape, covered up by a coat, scarf, high boots, dark glasses — you couldn't see what kind of body she had. And I used to stoop, to hide my breasts. Now we use our bodies confidently, we work well together, bounce off one another. Our humour is inter-

reactive, there's no stooge. It's based on history, friendship, trust.

J: *I did feel it was very personal — even private in parts! You said other women wanted to use the script?*

M: Other women in the campaign — we're pleased they want to, we can't do enough performances ourselves. One lot are an amateur theatre group already, the others want to use the script as a basis for improvising something that's more them.

J: *Did you have a director?*

E: Yes, Sue Dunderdale, who uses Stanislavsky methods — that means you break the play up into different units of meaning and feeling. You do a lot of mime and bodywork before you even start formal rehearsals — you say: these lines represent 'women are revolting' or 'men claim their power over women' and then act that feeling. So by the time you get to reading the actual lines, you've taught yourself how to act it. Nothing is imposed by the director.

What Sue gave us was a structure, a way to discipline our energy, to pace it. It's controlled frenzy now. We feel it's a very feminist way of directing, non-hierarchical, very unfrightening and productive.

J: *How did you come to write it?*

M: I was visiting London and popped in to see Fairweather. We got blind roaring drunk in the pub down the road; she was telling me she was going to write this play. We were shouting "If there's one thing I can't stand it's women's libbers — women should be passive" and doing a Carmelite nun routine: (Irish accent) "We're Carmelite nuns on our night off so don't insult my God. — Have you come to spread the gospel sister? — No I've come to spread my legs." But played like that it's not sexist, it can't be. Back home we carried on fantasising and improvising — "Backlash? Gimme a boot in the face!" — then taped it. After about half an hour we said, that's it, that's the idea for the play — the basic contradiction of women being strong and aggressive saying women are weak but in a way that terrifies people. □

*The play lasts 30 minutes. If you want to book it contact Pirate Jenny Team Two, Basement Flat, 76c Oxford Gardens, London W. 10 (01 960 5875).*



## New improved Pill?

Women worried about the risk of thrombosis (blood clotting) are usually offered reassuring statistics by the medical profession, or individual scare stories by the media. But in April the FPA and Kings College Hospital, London, independently announced action on the Pill.

The FPA is now advising doctors to prescribe a Pill containing 30 micrograms of oestrogen rather than the 50 microgram type. The low dose Pill is believed to carry less risk of thrombosis and other complications.

At present 57% of women on the Pill take the high dose. When they go to get their prescriptions renewed, many will be switched to the lower dose — it is equally effective in stopping pregnancy. But the 50 microgram Pill will not be removed from the FPA's approved list, as some women get bleeding in the middle of the menstrual cycle if the dose is not high enough.

Kings College Hospital recently announced their

latest research towards an improved Pill, using small doses of a substance called heparin that can counteract blood clotting. Research director Professor Kakkor commented, "We very much hope that during the next 12 to 18 months it will be possible to develop an oral form of heparin which could be combined with the Pill to make it completely safe." We very much hope that this isn't the start of a search for a solution to the side effects of side effects. □

Rosie Parker

## Builder loses

LONDON: Janet Kregell, sacked from a building site for swearing (see SR 58) has lost her case. The industrial tribunal ruled "you may swear in front of the boss but not at him", though the only woman on the panel believed that men workers were not dismissed for swearing. Janet, sure the sacking was discriminatory, plans to appeal. □



## Fashion workers for equal pay

EAST KILBRIDE: Ellen Nicklin (right), convenor at Laird Portch fashions, part of Jaeger, where 400 women came out on strike for equal pay on April 26, talks with others on the picket-line.

They've been demanding a job evaluation scheme ever since the Equal Pay Act came in, because a few unskilled men are earning more than skilled women who work as clothing machinists, cutters and inspectors. The women, members of the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers, want parity with these men as a minimum step towards equal pay.

On the same industrial estate, two other factories are in dispute — for increased bonus payments at Sunbeam Electrics and against redundancies at Hayward Tyler. They plan to demonstrate together and call for local support. □

Donations and support to Ellen Nicklin, 153 Leeward Circle, Westwood, East Kilbride, Scotland.





On the May Day march in London — the Grunwick strikers' float, with photographs of their struggle.

## Harrassment now official

On March 22 the government proudly announced a new immigration rule applying to 'marriages of convenience'. That date was chosen as it was the day before the Stechford by-election — the Labour government wanted to prove to voters that they were as good as anyone else when it came to keeping out the blacks.

The media promptly took the matter up: the government we were told had decided to clamp down on a loop-hole in the Immigration Law. In fact the change in the rule on marriages only meant that what the Immigration Department had been carrying out unofficially for months was now official.

Before June 1974 British women had no right to live in

this country with their foreign husbands. That June the 'Husbands Rule' was changed by Roy Jenkins, then Home Secretary, after a lot of pressure from civil rights and women's groups. But over the last year such couples have faced increasing harassment from police and immigration officers, and accusations that their marriages were not 'genuine'.

The change made on March 22 means that a foreign man married to a British woman cannot have his conditions of stay revoked — ie become 'British' — unless the couple can prove that they are sleeping together. Even if they can, the husband will be given an extension of stay of one year only, after which they will again have to satisfy police and

immigration officials that their marriage is not a 'marriage of convenience'.

What it means in practice is the sort of harassment reported in SR 47: repeated police visits, questions about, say, birth control and searches to confirm cohabitation. All this is now perfectly legal and has

Home Office sanction. Inevitably couples are harassed most often if the husband is black or Cypriot.

Attempts by Alex Lyon (in the House of Commons) and Lord Avebury (in the Lords) to force a debate on this subject appear to have failed. □

Amrit Wilson



## Chambermaids Strike at Station Hotel

*Chambermaids at London's Charing Cross Hotel came out on strike in mid-April and picketed the hotel for just over a week — management had broken an agreement offering them work on days off. Sue Sharpe went to the hotel to talk to them soon after the strike ended.*

During the strike even managers were making beds, until other cleaners were brought in. Pettily, management stopped the strikers' meals and as these are part of normal 'living in' conditions, the chambermaids responded by refusing to take part in talks with them.

The hotel is owned by British Rail, and most staff — including chambermaids! — are members of the National Union of Railwaymen. Their representative, Jean Jepson, is also a branch official, and though the branch was behind them, they got little support from the rest of the hotel staff. Jean, who's had experience of industrial action in Yorkshire, said, "Some of the chambermaids thought I was being hard on them making them picket every day, but I believe picketing wins strikes."

They returned to work on April 25 after an official inquiry was set up. An all-male team of union and management interviewed many of the women.

The report was written up on May 5 but the chambermaids aren't allowed a copy, it goes straight to 'higher levels' for scrutiny. "I think it's an



Madeline Harvey, Jean Jepson and Catherine Graham in their sixth floor sitting room (no lift).

awful waste of time because it won't do anything," said one woman. "The inquiry was about Jean and not about the hotel like it was meant to be. They asked what we thought of Jean...and did we enjoy our strike!"

### Cramped Conditions

Turnover is high, and when I was there only 21 remained of the 28 who'd been on strike, plus a few women brought in during the strike. Many are recruited from Europe, employed as cheap insecure labour that is less likely to cause trouble. Jean has noticed that hotel vacancies are advertised in embassies abroad whereas she's been unable to find them in labour exchanges here.

Living-in conditions are bad — tucked away on the sixth floor, reached via the stark concrete backstairs. A sitting-room about 14 foot square

with a few chairs and a TV is their social area, and they share three bathrooms and three toilets.

The tiny kitchen has a single electric ring and grill, which they had to use when their meals were stopped. One woman said this caused more swearwords and arguments than the rest of the strike — it could take 12 hours to cook a stew.

They have a small obsolete washing machine with a mangle, and hang clothes on a wooden clothes-horse in the boiler-room. It was a struggle to get even this. Clothes used to be hung dangerously on string between the pipes — only by threatening to hang knickers all round the top of the hotel were they given this.

In the dining room there's staff segregation — a partition and different coloured furniture denote different categories of staff. When they complained

they were told to pretend the partition wasn't there, but when a German girl unknowingly crossed the boundary she was turned out. Jean describes how the next day several more went into the area, whereupon other staff took their tea into the personnel office.

Chambermaids get only £22 clear for a 40-hour week, which begins at 6.45 am and includes taking early morning tea, cleaning bedrooms, bathrooms, corridors, lifts, stairs, offices, cloakrooms, bars and other public areas, as well as doing the linen etc. Pay includes a supplement of £4.50 (recently raised from £2.50) instead of tips (the head waiter's supplement is about £15).

Jean pointed out that a double room there can cost £24.50. The huge sums now being spent doing up the hotel for the Jubilee are ironic compared to the pay and conditions of its chambermaids. □



You're preparing a lecture on 'Identification of wanted men.' You think the recall of faces might be higher if they were pasted onto the bodies of pretty girls. Ask around—it shouldn't be difficult to get hold of suitable pictures.

From an Army advertisement for recruiting officers Sent in by Natasha de Chroustchoff, Iffley Oxford

## High-life of the urban zombies

HIGH-RISE apartment buildings help to make men effeminate, psychiatrist Daniel Cappon. Professor of Environmental Studies at York University, Toronto, said in Dunedin, New Zealand, today.

"A man with no garden to dig or the opportunity to carry out masculine activities becomes passive and effeminate helping his wife with her chores in high-rise buildings," he said.

From Manchester Evening News  
Sent in by Linda Alexander, Levenshulme, Manchester

●Male, 31, healthy wealthy and dull, seeks girlfriend. Vasectomised. Ideal pet for liberated woman. Bristol. Box 588

From Spare Rib classified advertisements  
Sent in by Sandra McNeill, Seven Kings, Essex

Behavioral studies have demonstrated that male and female children placed in the same situation react in totally different ways. A girl (top) will usually just sit in a playpen, not attempting to explore. But a boy (bottom) will probably move around more and at some point will try to stand up or climb out.



From Understanding Human Behaviour  
Sent in by Joanna Boissevain, London W2

Some wives genuinely don't seem to mind being knocked around. Some almost expect it, and don't complain!

These are usually the marriages where the wife has a streak of masochism in her make-up, and the husband is slightly sadistic. An extreme form of opposites attracting.

From the Evening Argus (Sussex) Sent in by Penny Glover, Hove

Why has there never been a single woman enlightened Master?

A woman cannot be a Master; it is not possible. When a woman arrives she becomes a Mistress, not a Master. The fulfillment of a woman is love, the flowering of a woman is love. Mastery is not the goal of the feminine mind. They don't become Masters, they become Mistresses. To be a Master is basically a male effort.

From Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh newsletter  
Sent in by Judy Scott, London W2

## REFUGES MEET

Over 90 Women's Aid groups were represented at the National Federation's conference in London on May 7/8. About ten new groups were accepted into the Federation, which now has about 120 groups.

The 400 people present discussed launching a general

campaign to give a focus for action and to publicise Women's Aid, showing its relation to women's position in society. This is especially important now because battering is no longer seen by the government as a "fashionable" problem, and because many feminists are frightened of the refuges being taken over by do-gooders, and by men.

A European conference on battered women will be held in

Amsterdam in March 1978 — the Federation decided to send two delegates, one a member of a support group, the other a battered woman from a refuge.

Small groups talked about living in refuges, Women's Aid and sexuality, and racialism, problems round rehousing, social security and the law, and problems of funding — Job Creation and Urban Aid grants are short-term, and

about two thirds of refuges aren't funded at all, surviving on jumble sales and donations.

Everyone discussed the structure of the Federation and the conference, the only policy-making body — how to make it as simple and unbureaucratic as possible, while still having some structure so that all kinds of people have a chance to talk. □

Information from Oxford Women's Aid

# Tooth & Nail

PLEASE KEEP SENDING  
SEXIST CUTTINGS,  
PHOTOS, QUOTES AND  
ADVERTISEMENTS TO  
"TOOTH AND NAIL",  
INCLUDING ALL DETAILS  
WHICH MAY BE NEEDED  
BY PEOPLE WANTING  
TO FIGHT BACK.

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT  
SEXIST ADS:  
the manufacturers of the product  
advertised and/or the agency  
who make up the ad.

WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:  
The Independent Broadcasting  
Authority, for ITV ads and  
programmes, 70 Brompton Road,  
London SW9.

The Advertising Standards  
Authority, though notoriously  
unresponsive to complaints  
about sexism, 15 Ridgemount  
Street, London WC1.

WHO TO WORK WITH:  
AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair  
Images and Representation in  
Media). A group acting against  
sexism and offensive stereotyping,  
can be contacted at 35  
Colehorne Road, London SW10.

### Fighting Sexism through the Unions

Next time you see in the press, and hear on the radio, something which trivialises or demeans women, don't only complain to the editor, there is another avenue and one which with your help could have a much more far-reaching effect. The Equality Working Party of the National Union of Journalists has been asked by their National Conference to investigate the observance of clause 10 of the Journalists Code of Conduct which states that, "Journalists shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or sexual orientation." We would ask you to send a letter of complaint about sexist material to: The Mother or Father of the NUJ Chapel at the publication concerned, with a copy of the letter and relevant cuttings to the editor, and to the Equality Working Party, NUJ, Acorn House, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Angela Phillips



# WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

The most important thing to remember is, **that they do work** — providing the woman has no violent prejudice against the use of artificial sexual stimulation. Some women find the shape off-putting. The phallic symbolism, deliberately created by the makers to emphasize its sexual usage, gives them the impression that it is meant to be used as an artificial penis, and indeed it can and is so used. Some women, however, find the effect — when used in this way — to be more numbing than stimulating.

The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special 'money refund' service if you are not satisfied.

If you want to experiment with your own personal vibrator, just complete the coupon below.

Please send me a Harmony Personal Vibrator.  
I enclose Cheque/P.O./Cash for £4.50 (including postage and packing)

Name: .....

Address: .....

Please  
PRINT  
Clearly

**Pellan Personal Products Ltd.,  
Dept SR  
1a West Green Road, London, N.15**

## Classified

### events

●JULIA'S UPSTAIRS ROOM DISCO has moved to the Royal Albert, St. Stephen's Terrace, Bolney Street—off Dorset Road London SW6. Now 12.00–2.00 pm Sunday, and Saturday+Sunday nights.



### conferences etc

●WOMEN'S STUDIES residential weekend course 10–12 June at Ferryside Education Centre, Dyfed. Videotapes, slides, talks, assertiveness training. 6pm Friday–2pm Sunday. £15.00 inclusive with application by 26 May (bursaries available). Enquiries Gill Boden, Cardiff University Dept. of Extra-Mural Studies (Cardiff 44211 ext 2547; home, Cardiff 20478)

●WOMANSPiRiT conference 16–19 June. The spiritual significance of the woman-oriented woman in the Christian Church. Topics include women and the Church, women and violence, women's bodies, and films, music, etc. Organised by Student Christian Movement. Details: Jo Garcia, 126 Lime Walk, Oxford

●SEMINARS: political censorship, an international perspective (26 May) Can we do without Government Censorship? (2 June) 7pm Defence of Literature and the Arts Society/ICA, Nash House, London SW1, 85p. DLAS members 75p. Booking/details 01-930 6393

### work offered

●Women's Theatre Group requires experienced musician (preferably drums) with interest in music. Preferably write immediately to 25 Clifton Hill, London NW8

●Crack typist to train as phototypesetter. Small company of women in Holborn. Good pay. Phone 01-405 4498

●People needed to fill roles of staff or senior resident in running of community in Woking, and participate in affairs of other self-determining communities in Surrey. Exciting and experimental. Ruth Hood, Reigate 41324

●The Women's Research and Resources Centre needs a qualified or experienced feminist librarian to work two days a week with a small growing collection of Women's Liberation publications in London, and share routine work of running the Centre. Knowledge/experience of Women's Liberation/Women's Studies, ability to work alone, typing, all essential. £1400 p.a. Phone 01-388 0882 (Tuesday to Friday) for job description. Applications close June 8.

●WOMEN graphics/comics artists wanted for new British women's comic. Contact Sue Varty, 9 Edgbaston Rd, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12.

●ACTON WOMEN'S AID have a vacancy for a worker to work with battered women in their refuge in Ealing. Phone Jane, 01-994 4244 for details.

INTERESTED  
IN ADVERTISING  
AND COMMITTED  
TO SPARE RIB?

If you don't need a living wage but would like to organise classified and display advertising space in Spare Rib, write to Rose explaining why.

### accommodation offered

●OLD VICARAGE for sale Sheffield 13. Suitable communal living. Eleven rooms plus kitchen, toilets, bathroom, garage, third acre gardens. Good order. £13,500. Contact Jane Quiggin, 317 Rectory Road, Gateshead, or phone Sheffield 587120

●Mature and committed people to share excitement and problems of re-opening one of six communities in Surrey. Reigate 41324

Home for two in shared house in Sheffield. Rent £24 each monthly. Own rooms. Box 594.

●Two rooms large and small, in large ground floor NW6 flat, large communal garden. Share with woman and child, and man. £18/week all inclusive. Want parent (preferably socialist and/or feminist) and child 3–6. 01-485 8643

### accommodation wanted

●North London: room wanted by female student. Friendly communal household preferred. Box 596

●Two women and child are looking for accommodation in Camden. Please ring Ruth 01-722 0351, 1–8pm

### publications

●THE COMING AGE: magazine of the Goddess religion. 35p. 3 Hill-view Road, Oxford

●WIRES: the national WOMEN'S LIBERATION INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE. Send us all your information and queries. Keep in touch with the movement: bi-monthly NEWSLETTER subscription group rates (2 copies) £12/year, £3/quarter (small and poor groups, £8, £2); individual rates (1 copy) £5/year (£3 if poor). Additional copies at £3/year, £1/quarter. Cheques/POs/donations payable to WIRES c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 1. Tel: LDS 35561 ask for WIRES (shared phone)

WOMEN'S LIBERATION LITERATURE or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh

THE GIRLS' GUIDE—1977 for GAY WOMEN. Annual discreet pocket size international bar/club guide and complete directory. This fourth edition: 40 countries/3000 listings; centres, switchboards, publications, bookstores and much, much more. £2.00 only from THE GIRLS' GUIDE, 1 North End Rd, London W14. Discreet mail order only—one week delivery for all orders. Also on sale at THE GATEWAYS and STERLING'S BOOKSTORE, 57 St Martin's Lane, London WC2



## New Yale Books in Women's Studies

### THE BONDS OF WOMANHOOD

"Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780 - 1835

Nancy F. Cott

Based on scores of women's unpublished diaries, letters, organizational records, and papers, this study investigates the circumstances and the consciousness of middle-class American women as they ordinarily lived, worked and thought. £9.00

### "DOCTORS WANTED: NO WOMEN NEED APPLY"

Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835 - 1975

Mary Roth Walsh

The author shows that the all-male American medical establishment made a conscious effort to limit the number of women physicians. From both psychological and economic motives, men tried to deny equal access to medical careers. £10.80

### SEX ROLES IN THE STATE HOUSE

Irene Diamond

The author looks at the different roles of women in US state legislatures. She concludes that women will not win political equality without a fundamental restructuring of institutions. Approx £9.00 June publication.

**Yale University Press**

20 Bloomsbury Square, London, WC1.

### WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION

The struggle for Women's Liberation is worldwide - but what is life like for women in the Soviet Union, where equality has been an economic and legal reality for over 50 years.

Find out for yourself. We can offer you a subscription to *Soviet Women*, a well-illustrated monthly magazine posted directly to you from Moscow, which deals with all aspects of the life and work of Soviet women.

We can also offer you an interesting new book, *Soviet Women*, which discusses, from a soviet viewpoint, the issues of Women's Liberation. It includes chapters on women's personality, the family, pre-school education and 'forming a new attitude to women'.

Send this coupon with your remittance to: **CENTRAL BOOKS LTD**, 37 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS.

Please supply the magazine 'Soviet Women'  
 a1 year £1.50 a2 years £2.25  
 Please supply the book 'Soviet Women'  
 a1 £1.25 post free

Name .....

Address .....

I enclose cheque/PO for £ : p.SR/5

● **SAPPHO** Lesbian/feminist magazine 50p inc. post. Meetings every Tuesday, 7.30pm Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, W2

● Old, rare, foreign and secondhand gay books bought and sold. **BM-BREAKINGOUT** London WC1V 6XX

● Nobody's too poor to pay. **CLAP TAX!** Community Levy for alternative projects latest handbook/directory - send 16½p stamps - or does your project need money? If radical, imaginative, community-based, apply to **CLAP**, c/o BIT, 146 Gt Western Road, London W11 (01-229 8219)

### centres

● **'A WOMAN'S PLACE'**, 42 Earlham St (01-836 6081). Open 10am-10pm weekdays and 10am-6pm Saturdays. Feminist information centre and meeting place. Books, publications, weekly newsletter (10p per copy or 15p by post), posters, women's group list, referral services, coffee and talk. Run by open collective which meets Tuesdays 7.30pm.

● **WOMEN'S RESEARCH AND RESOURCES CENTRE** information exchange, library and meeting place for people doing research on women and feminist concerns. Their bi-monthly newsletter lists and reviews latest publications, seminars and meetings held by them and others, and the latest gives details of women's studies courses running in Britain. Sub. annually £5, or what you can afford, **WRRRC**, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Tel 01-388 0882

● **RIGHTS OF WOMEN (ROW)** national legal resource centre run by women. For individuals and organisations trying to extend and enforce women's rights. **FREE LEGAL ADVICE SERVICE** especially for problems of sex discrimination, employment, matrimonial and welfare issues. 7-9pm Wednesdays, 2 St Paul's Road, London N1. Write, call in or phone 01-359 6656

### therapy/growth

● **WOMAN PSYCHOTHERAPIST** (Jungian) tel 01-348 5593 preferably before 10am

### travel

● **LIFT EXCHANGE CENTRE** arranges contact between people needing/offering lifts UK/abroad and regular London commuting. 01-834 9225 (petrol sharing basis)

### MAGIC BUS

**Amsterdam**

**DAILY £10**

**Paris £10.50**

**Athens £25**

**Delhi £70**

**Lisbon £38.50**

plus worldwide economy travel

74 Shaftesbury Avenue

London W1

01-439 0729/0557

### travellers

● **Female share driving/petrol/camping Greece and back July and August with woman and child.** 01-444 6126

### holiday places

● **Improve your French join young mixed group Dordogne farmhouse £18 week. Lepper, 6 Cherry Gardens, Wye Kent.** (0233) 812 609

### for sale



**FIGHT THE CUTS & STUFF THE JUBILEE!**

BADGES 20p each incl. post  
 10 for £1.50, 100 for £13.50  
 post free

**MONEY GOES TO SAVE SOCIALIST WORKER PRINTSHOP** from SAVAGE FINES & COURT COSTS of 4 current libel suits.

CASH with orders to:

Sherril Yanowitz  
 116 Fortune Green Road  
 London NW6

## 1908 SUFFRAGE POSTER IN COLOUR £1 (UK & seamail)



*First published by The Brighton and Hove Women's Franchise Society in 1908.*

Send cash, PO's, cheques to:

Spare Rib Posters.

27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Make out cheques to Spare Ribs Ltd.

NAME

ADDRESS





Jubilee?  
What a load of rubbish! Arrogant, hypocritical rubbish in a year when living standards have been cut by 4 per cent, when hospitals are being closed 'for lack of money', when our children are being taught in overcrowded classrooms 'for lack of money', when councils have stopped building houses 'for lack of money'.  
The royal family costs as much as a new hospital every year they're costing millions more this jubilee year.  
Don't let them get away with it. Tell them to **STUFF THE JUBILEE!**

**STICKERS:** 800 (eight different designs, 100 of each) for £2.50  
**POSTERS:** 30 for £1.50, 20p each if you must have one for your wall

☐ All printed in red and black, all different designs.  
FROM Socialist Worker (Jubilee), Corbridge Works (SR), Corbridge Crescent, London E2

●People Against Sexism group starting in North London Tuesdays 01-348 5118

## personal

●Feminist 20 seeks lovely lady unattached. Brighton area. Box 593  
●RADICAL TEACHER—male, 25, seeks feminist to correspond etc. Box 590

●Guy, 25, Socialist and feminist. Trying to meet sympathetic woman for friendship—possibly ongoing relationship. Am student (London), unexceptional by appearance, calm and unassertive, but also outgoing, enthusiastic and sincere. Likes— theatre, jazz, eating/cooking, countryside expeditions, etc. Box 591

●Gay British man seeks/offers marriage to woman from USA (pref. gay) for mutual benefit. Box 592

●Very intelligent and attractive fit man, 36, poor, interested meditation, writing, etc., hoping to start new career in photography, longing to find lady to love and share life with. Box 595

## contacts

●NATIONWIDE female only contacts; very private and confidential. Please send SAE for prompt reply to "Ariadne" The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.

## wanted

●NEW DUPLICATOR, TYPEWRITER AND UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION about group activities urgently needed by 'A Woman's Place'—broken into immediately after National Conference, and information and equipment stolen. Contact 42 Earlham St., London WC2.

●URGENT LONDON: Please send Eleanor any information you'd like included in next month's SPARE RIB REGIONAL PAGE on London. By end of May.

●I'm looking for a sympathetic 'boarding school' for independent (i.e. hates school) 9-yr-old girl, within reach of London. Any ideas? Box 597

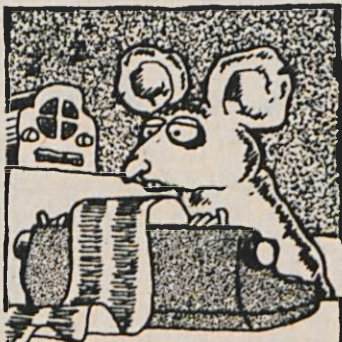
6393  
Rd, Gateshead, or phone  
●SPARE RIB needs to contact urgently BARBARA MILLER who sent us an article about a suffragette handkerchief. Apologies for losing you.

## general services

●GARDENING maintenance and landscaping by qualified and experienced women. Phone Lex 01-602 3519

●VAL and TRUCK. Removals for women. North London 01-272 4060

KARATE Shotokan style taught by woman Black Belt every Tuesday 7-9 pm Camden Women's Centre. Further info. 01-229 0145.

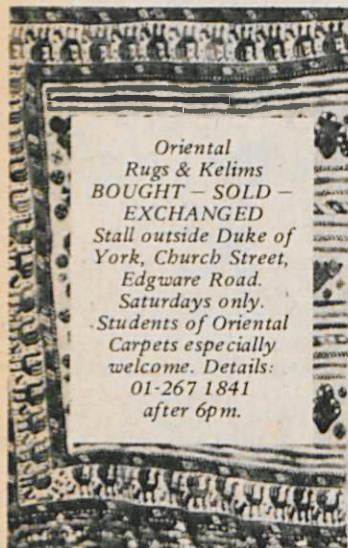


IBM Typesetting  
by Caroline MacKechnie  
Litho Design/Paste-up/Illustration  
by J. Edward Barker  
105 Golborne Road, London W10  
Telephone 01-969 5083  
Good rates for alternative publications

## groups

●BARNET anyone interested in starting women's group ring Sue 01-449 3941 after 5pm

●A Self Help Group is being formed in Clapham, dealing with free pregnancy testing and discussion groups. Any interested women please phone Francis or Sue on 622 7885 for more details



A pack of 10 Spare Rib cards and envelopes available at 30p. Each card contains a list of women's centres around the country (though some are out of date).

## CORRECTION

To the report on 'Married woman's option in national insurance to change'—SR 57, page 23.

The third sentence of the second paragraph was misleading; it should read: "If you are already married, and have opted to pay reduced contributions, you can continue to do so. If you are married but have not already opted for reduced contributions, the final date you can record with the DHSS a choice to pay reduced contributions is May 11."

We're sorry we couldn't publish this correction before May 11.

If you want to join or start a group, find work, a travel companion, or a missing friend, start a household or share a house, have something to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

5TH BIRTHDAY ISSUE COPY DATE 2 JUNE FOR 22 JUNE

Rates: 10p per word, 15p caps, £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad), 50p for Box Number

Payment: Ads must be prepaid by cheque or PO. Make payable to SPARE RIBS LTD. Send to SPARE RIB, 27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE, LONDON EC1R 0AT.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

☐ Tick if Box Number required. ☐ Tick if Semi-Display required.

I enclose £ . . . . . for . . . . . no. of issues.

NAME . . . . .

ADDRESS . . . . .

TEL . . . . .

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box. Underline any words you require in caps. PLEASE SEND LARGE STAMPED ENVELOPE FOR A BOX NO.

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
22		
25		
28		
31		
34		



# KUNSTLERINNEN

## WOMEN ARTISTS

### INTERNATIONAL 1877-1977

Enormous exhibitions of women's art opened recently in Italy, the USA and Germany. The international show in Berlin was particularly eye-opening — but stormy, raising crucial questions about all-women shows. We need them because prejudiced exhibition selection procedures have been one reason why we've seen so little women's art. But we also need to think out feminist formats for exhibitions. Do we want to distinguish between feminist art and women's art? How are we going to deal with problems of selection? Should there be selection? And if there is selection, on what grounds and how do you make the criteria clear? Here, the organisers of the Berlin exhibition, its critics within the women's movement, and participants give their views.

The collective who organised it say . . .

(translated from the exhibition catalogue and the Berlin-based feminist magazine *Courage*)

"Without the women's movement, this exhibition would never have come about. We are practisers and theoreticians, artists and academics, creators and public. We are not professionals in the art market: that is essential to how the exhibition is — not meant as an apology or a justification, but as a positive statement.

"In choosing artists we did not allow ourselves to be influenced by public criteria (art market, art criticism, famous names). We did not let ourselves be corrupted. If we show many famous contemporary artists, one reason is that the myth of the undiscovered genius is indeed a myth."

The collective stress that they issued an open invitation, through advertisements, for any woman to send art for

them to consider. The work selected was determined by the composition of the group — all members had had some involvement with the women's movement. They acknowledged that it was a subjective process "but then again it wasn't as we see ourselves as part of the public".

Selection criteria developed as they went along but they all agreed that "the formal transposition, the finding of an adequate form for intended themes and content, is decisive. The feminist content (what is that?) alone is not enough. Whether an artist is conscious or not of her situation as a woman does not necessarily decide the quality of her work. There are artists who distance themselves from the women's movement and who did not want to exhibit their work with us, who nonetheless present in their pictures central experiences, anxieties and visions of women. On the other hand, even with work by women in the movement, we often had the impression that through disregard for formal considerations, content was lost, falsified, denied or even turned into its opposite. But that also says something about the authenticity of the experiences and contents."

They excluded agitational art "without aesthetic transformation" as well as exaggerated "earth mother" images. Instead they "tried to seek out women artists who brought forward innovations in form and content. For that you have to learn to look again. Art market criteria for innovations are questionable." But making value judgements wasn't easy: "Again and again we found ourselves having to decide whether we should take into consideration the living circumstances and difficulties of individual artists or go by the quality of the pictures. We tried always to decide for the latter, even though this left us uneasy. But we had to select. Space, time, money and our own capacities set limits."

Their concern was not to analyse the different trends in women's art, but to "make clear that women artists are under-represented on all sides, and that they can look back to predecessors. For women's understanding of themselves, for their confidence in their own abilities, a knowledge of their own cultural tradition is important, and not only in relation to artistic work.

"Our present aesthetic perception is trained by a masculine culture, and we can't change this perception ad hoc. We must see, see a lot, see everything that women have done in art so far."

Their critics say . . .

Even before the show opened a debate began in *Courage*, raising objections to selection and to the criteria used. For example, Sarah Haffner published a protest saying she refused to exhibit because others were rejected. She felt that the organising collective had their own "feminist line" and rejected things because they believed they were "sexist" or "not feminine". She resented women making such judgements about other women, writing: "For centuries that which women paint has been kept secret, not spoken of, or attributed to men . . . Women weren't supposed to paint and so (according to men) they didn't. Hence the still widespread opinion that women can't paint."

During the exhibition criticism came from the movement. One evening at the women's centre a leaflet was read out, apparently from the organising collective, inviting anyone to take anything she had created to the exhibition and hang it. The leaflet said, "The choice (of exhibits) is subjective and we stand by our criteria of quality. From the women's movement came an unexpected amount of criticism of our concept. We take this criticism seriously and have decided to widen the



exhibition's scope." A similar announcement was made over the radio but they were hoaxes — nothing to do with the organisers. However, when women arrived at the show, the organisers provided a space for them to hang their work, while a group of women painted their bodies and one played music.

### The participators say . . .

(written for *The Women Artists Collective* by Jessica York from discussions with members who exhibited in Berlin: Sonia Knox, Tina Keane, Rose Finn Kelcey, Mary O'Shea)

This was the biggest and most ambitious exhibition of women's art to have been organised in Europe. A reduced version will be in Frankfurt during May.

Apart from myself, the members of the Women Artists Collective who went to Berlin didn't just go to look but to take part in the exhibition. Their relationship to it was a working one.

Sonia went over first with Jane Low and Margaret Harrison (ex-members of the group) and four members of the women's postal art collective, to set up her work before the show opened. So she got involved in the last minute rush to hang the exhibition. There was an enormous pressure of practical problems which caused a certain amount of tension for all of us; some work, for example, was accidentally sent to Frankfurt instead of to Berlin.

Sonia was also in time for the Private View, evidently a very stylish affair, packed out with the Berlin "art scene" and well covered by the local media. There was never again quite that atmosphere of trendiness, although the exhibition was very well attended by both women and men.

By the time the rest of us got to Berlin, Sonia and the others had initiated a network of contacts with women in the Berlin collective and outside. And as most of us stayed with women artists we had met before, we had a sense of being part of the situation even though we had only just arrived.

Most of our daytimes were spent at the exhibition working out practical problems, especially to do with the performances which Tina and Rose together, and Mary, would be giving late in the week. In ironing out the difficulties we got to know the German women's collective. And in the evenings we all met with them at the cinema which held a festival of women's films and video in conjunction with the exhibition. Then we usually went on to eat together or to visit all-women bars. Our social life interacted fully with our working situation and created an intense, total involvement with women's art. It was an unusual experience for all of us, particularly those who normally live with the routine requirements of children.

Our impressions of the exhibition were gained as much, or more, through working on it, as from spending hours looking at each individual piece of work. In our group discussions since coming back we are aware how much the exhibition is helping us to clarify our ideas.

The exhibition was hung in three galleries, the main part was in the Orangery of the Charlottenburg Palace, a surprisingly grand setting. This housed the historical part of the show with well known artists from 1877 usually represented by just one of their works.

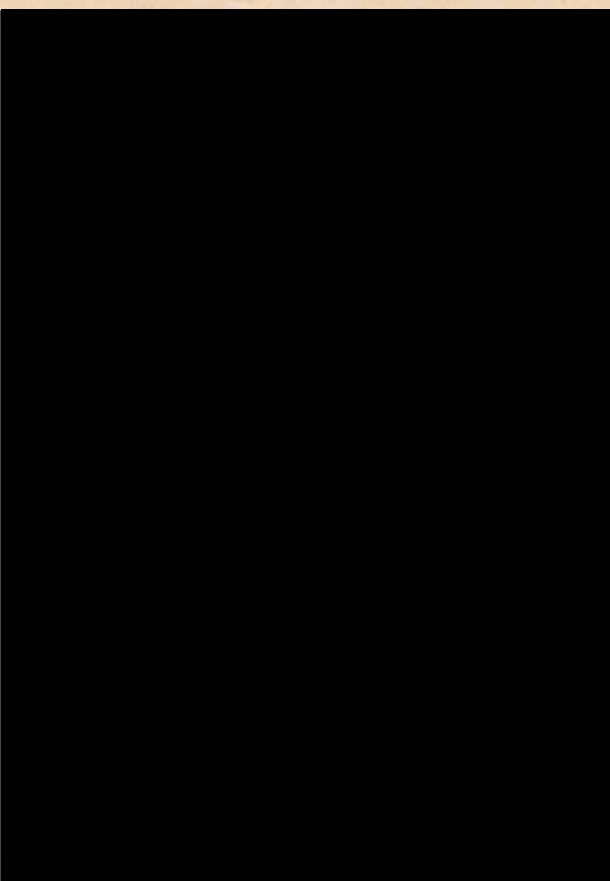


Fig 6: Suzanne Valadon *Nude With Palette* (1927). A life model who became an artist.

Most were obvious choices, though some of the German artists were unfamiliar to us and very interesting — Alice Lex-Nerlinger (Fig 1) particularly springs to mind. This section seemed to have been conditioned by what was available and we felt that artists whose work we knew well were not always represented at their best. But it provided an opportunity to look at women's contribution to the main art movements of the last hundred years. And it helped us see what, if anything, they shared as women, which is often lost when their work is seen in the context of the relevant art movement.

The historical works were hung in a random way, interspersed with recent photographs and paintings, some by well known artists like Bridget Riley, Eva Hesse, Helen Frankenthaler, Agnes Martin and Hannah Hoch — work from the USA and eight European countries.

Recent work in mixed media and photography (including our own) and many of the performances were housed separately in the Kunstbibliothek. The third section was an analytical compilation of photographs which looked at the images of women in painting and the media compared to their "real-life" postures.

The seven German women who organised the exhibition came together as a collective three years ago. As an unestablished group of women they had a difficult time raising the money to finance the show (eventually the German equivalent to the Arts Council gave funds). They only had a year left for actual organisation, a remarkably short time for a show of this scale. To some extent the strain was apparent in the exhibition, not to mention in the organisers who had obviously been working themselves into the ground.

Implicit in their choice of work for the show was a view, if not a definition, of what they took to be "Women's Art". I think some of us were a bit disappointed by what had been excluded — for



Fig 5: Gwen John *Girl With Bare Shoulders* (1909-10). Insight in isolation.

example contemporary work by non-figurative artists. Some of us felt that by excluding this kind of work that could be said to be "male dominated", the organisers had pre-empted our own evaluation of the problem.

Apart from the well known artists, where no such criterion seemed to have been applied, most of the recent work made explicit use of women as subject matter. This gave the exhibition a clear sense of cohesion with the women's movement.

It seems important that the women's movement should give the support to increase the range and ambition of our work, rather than acting in any way to



restrict it. We were worried that some of the recent work was trying to find too literal a visual equivalent for the basic verbal assumptions of the movement. The assumptions we all have about roles and sexual exploitation operate at such a general level that unless a very personal way is found to describe them, the visual equivalents tend to have a journalistic stereotypedness about them. This is accentuated when an artist dwells on the subject matter at the expense of her medium, which tends to happen if naturalistic painting or photography are used — though it is not inevitable with these medium.

Many women actually use sexist stereotypes — images of our oppression — to describe our reaction to it. The irony with which the images are used is difficult to articulate, and they can remain

ambiguous. Take for example Ulrike Ottinger and Tabea Blumenstein's photograph "Portrait of a Drinker" (Fig 2)

Walking through the exhibition made me think of that selfconscious phase of adolescence when I spent hours staring into the mirror, hoping to discover the "real me". Some of the painting and photography seems to have been used in much the same way. Where this is made explicit, the artist is able to extend the unyielding nature of that experience and give us some clue to what she has found. We thought Florence Henri's "Self Portrait" (Fig 3) and G.A. Breitling's "Alice Through the Looking Glass" (Fig 4) were interesting to compare.

We feel much of this use of art parallels certain levels of consciousness raising and has a similar value. But there is a danger in seeing this as the predominant and most relevant use of art to the women's movement. It is interesting to compare the recent art with work by earlier artists. Whereas the past artists were working in a positive way within the limitations imposed upon them by their conditions as women; recent artists have become so conscious of these limitations that there is a tendency to reiterate them rather than finding any way of going beyond them.

Gwen John is one of the earlier artists whose work we most admire. But looking at it, we are aware that the clarity with which she saw and painted her subjects, was closely related to a sense of extreme isolation. Women have gone some way to overcoming that isolation but have yet to rediscover a comparable clarity.

There is a sense of this quality for me in the work of some of the English and Italian artists. It may be partly that I am more familiar with their art but I do find

their attempt to sustain the whole work — developing the subject and the medium in an integral way — optimistic. Perhaps the women of these countries are helped by sympathetic artistic traditions. The predominant German tradition of expressionist and polemical art, on the other hand, seems to have encouraged some of the more strident and stereotyped approaches we mentioned earlier.

We have to thank the Berlin women's collective for giving us the opportunity to show our work to women of other countries. And even in our experience Berlin has given a powerful stimulus to the discussion and practice of women's art, making us feel part of a collective enterprise and helping us to make international contacts with women artists.

The exhibition certainly showed us that women can take control of all the circumstances which affect the production of their art. The particular importance of this has been highlighted in Britain recently where an interest in Women's Art had become fashionable, and people press for definitions of "women's art" and "feminist art" to facilitate easy consumption. The Berlin women created a precedent, on an international scale, for how women can find for themselves the physical and mental space to pursue problems they have begun to work on. In this way we can resist divisive pressures from outside. □

*Any woman who is interested in looking at the illustrated, massive catalogue in German, or at our slides of the work, or who would be interested to take part in our discussions, is welcome to contact the Women Artists Collective, now housed at The Women's Art Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1. Tel: 01-935 1841.*



un  
de  
wo  
slip

nu

ou

his  
to

wi

an

arr  
I c

an

I a  
Wh

chi  
an  
kit  
the

or  
top  
on  
be  
che  
tur  
rec  
I th  
I g

bla

Su

his

sor  
abo  
nur

wif

a

a

I".

a

a

a

did

Abc



the  
d  
t I  
en  
nt  
tite  
his

s,

and  
n  
s

of

ou







## more letters

ing mercury was taken off the market some time ago, and may I make a plea for the inclusion of our spermicide Duragel and Duracreme on your list. These are widely used in clinics, as being "best buy" in various "Which" supplements on contraceptives, and are of course IPPF tested and FPA approved.  
Yours sincerely  
E C Corderoy  
LR Industries CIS

### A Sensation in Tweed

Dear Spare Rib

After reading your run down of the fashion scene at the Women's Conference, my mind is made up. At the next one I will turn up wearing a knee length tweed coat, seamless, flesh coloured tights and carry a shopping bag with a zip.

I will cause a sensation and who knows it might well start a fashion that will spread to the ordinary women in the street.  
Yours in sisterhood  
Valerie Lowe  
Brighton

### Active ALRA

Dear Spare Rib

In her very full report on the Benyon Abortion (Amendment) Bill, (SR 57) Mandy Moore mentions ALRA (Abortion Law Reform Association) solely in the context of our proposed Model Abortion Bill which was published shortly before the Benyon Bill was discussed.

I should like to point out that ALRA undertook numerous activities centred around the Benyon

Bill, quite apart from publishing our own Bill. For example, on Thursday February 24th, ALRA mounted a parliamentary lobby, supplying lobbyists with a copy of the Bill and an analysis of its clauses, together with a guide to how to lobby MPs. All afternoon a steady trickle of lobbyists took part, and the trickle would have been greatly swelled had some of the hundreds of NAC supporters who packed Central Hall for their rally also joined their sisters in the Central Lobby.

In addition, ALRA convened, the same evening, a "prestige" meeting in the House of Commons, chaired and addressed by eminent pro-abortion parliamentarians.

In the weeks preceding the Second Reading, all of ALRA's efforts were directed towards this event, and indeed on February 21st we placed a ¼-page advertisement in the *Guardian*, drawing public attention to the Bill. (Photocopy enclosed.) Since then, we have set up a lobbying group to concentrate on argument and discussion with those who unfortunately are still the decision-makers — the MPs.

Mandy Moore's brief mention of ALRA gave the impression that ALRA is not concerned with defeating the Benyon Bill, but only with our own proposed legislation. On the contrary, we are very aware that the immediate necessity is to kill the Benyon Bill, but we hope that our Model Bill will stimulate

discussion among pro-abortion organisations on possible alternative repealing legislation in favour of a woman's right to choose.

Rita Craft  
Committee member  
ALRA

### Safety pin up

Dear Spare Rib

I am twelve years old but I have already been felt up twice. Once was in the bus, the other time in the subway train. The first time I moved away to my mother (a few people down) and immediately the man got off the bus. The second time, as soon as I was sure of what the man was doing, I said loudly, "Don't touch me!" and he got off under the gaze of all the other passengers. As I was going home after this incident I voiced my indignation to my mother. She replied, after thinking for a while, "I'll have to get you a big safety pin." Naturally I asked her what she meant and she explained that her grandmother had told her mother, and her mother had told her, that when a man started feeling you up, you put a hatpin (or a straightened safety pin) in the place where he was touching you, and stared him in the face. I think it would get rid of any pest of this sort and I suggest that anyone with troubles like mine should use it.  
Elena  
Spain



# reviews

## FILMS

### THE EGA STAYS OK

#### The Newsreel Collective

Putting flesh on the bones of political slogans is never easy. The struggle is to keep the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital functioning on its present site has been going for over two years. Last year, when every other channel had been exhausted the workers occupied at the hospital. A film of this struggle could easily have been either a kindly overview of a local struggle or yet another piece of left-wing rhetoric.

The EGA film is neither. The people tell their own story — nurses, ancillary workers, doctors, consultants, representatives of the local community, patients and trade unionists from neighbouring hospitals. Each speaks from her, sometimes his, own position. The black women canteen workers talk about being thrown out of work and on the dole, the women consultants about the loss of career opportunities for women doctors.

Shop stewards from the Royal Free and UC hospitals discuss the proposed closure of the EGA in the context of the overall cuts in the NHS: they are certain that what's happening at the EGA today could happen to their hospital tomorrow, unless the EGA does stay. Like the radiographer who wonders ruefully what's going to happen to her next: one day at the Poplar hospital (now closed) all her equipment just got moved out, and now they're trying to do the same at the EGA.

The political lessons emerge. Everyone tells their own story, but always with the same conclusion: the need for unity. Unity between workers at one hospital and another, women at the bottom of the NHS hierarchy and doctors at the top, hospital workers and the users of the hospital in the community.

Nevertheless, there is no pretence that these lessons were learnt overnight. The real relationships between

different sections, often initially opposed, has only been realised through tackling the concrete problems that come up in the stages of the campaign. As one EGA worker remarks, originally hardly anybody at the hospital was in the union: they unionised because they had to. It was the only way to keep the hospital and their jobs.

To criticise the film for discussing the need for a women's hospital primarily in terms of the right for women to be treated by women, rather than the potential role that such a hospital *could* play in providing for women's health needs is, in a sense, irrelevant. This is a vital issue and discussions are now going on in the hospital as the campaign reaches a further stage. And

to demand correct lines in a film could well be to sacrifice a graphic description of the process of developing political consciousness for a more unprofitable didacticism.

There is no mistaking, though, the gut feminism of the campaign. The EGA was the first hospital in Britain to occupy because it is a women's hospital. Whatever doubts, fears, confusions the women workers had they were all committed to the EGA as a women's hospital run by and for women. Again, the film lets the women at the EGA make their own case. Just watching and hearing so many women talking about their lives and what actions they took is a moving testament to their cause.

This film could not, of course, have been made without the EGA campaign; but

the Newsreel Collective deserves credit for having the honesty and perhaps political humility to let those in the struggle speak for themselves.

If you haven't seen the film order it now for your group. I found the film funny and uplifting, but more important the next time somebody chants "the people united will never be defeated" I'll know a bit more about what that really means.

The EGA Campaign needs support. If you can help with picketing contact Arthur at the EGA. Or send donations to the EGA campaign.

Angie Weir

You can order the film from:  
The Newsreel Collective,  
c/o Chris Thomas,  
2 Ridge Mount,  
Ridge Road, London NW2.  
tel: 01-794 2825.

### RIDDLES OF THE SPHINX

Laura Mulvey and

Peter Wollen

(Two Views)

This is a significant advance on *Penthesilea*, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's first film. It is more accessible, more enjoyable, less academic and arguably more feminist — or rather, feminism is more evident in the film. It deals with certain political issues around childcare of concern to all women and attempts to explore the relation between these and a "politics of the unconscious".

The film proceeds in seven sections, the principal and central one taking the form of a story unfolded in a series of 360° camera pans, "which both interacts with the narrative events and produces its own patterns of expectations and memory". The spectator is engaged but not unthinkingly so, partly because the camera doesn't pretend not to be there.

The film is in many senses open, understandable on several levels. These notes are intended as an accompaniment to the film — I hope they will help you to extract from it as much as possible of its extraordinary wealth of



The weaning of the mother from the child is central to the film.

meaning.

To find the solution to a riddle, you must first discover the key to the terms in which it is put. One of the references in the title of the film is to the moment in the Oedipal legend when Oedipus approaches the city of Thebes and is posed a riddle by the Sphinx, a mythical female creature. The answer to the riddle ("what being, with only one voice, has sometimes two feet, sometimes three, sometimes four and is weakest when it has the most?") requires the transposition of physical attribute onto life cycle. This is the key to the riddle whose answer in the legend is, of course, man. What the film

poses, however, is not this nor any other specific riddle so much as a whole series of meanings which revolve around the structure and logic of riddles in general, and in relation to the wider meanings associated with the figure of the Sphinx.

In the second of the seven sections of the film, Laura Mulvey speaks of the Sphinx in the Oedipus story as symbolic of the place occupied by woman in the patriarchal order. She is outside that order, as the Sphinx was outside the city, but at the same time she poses a threat or challenge to it. The Sphinx's place in her other context, that of ancient Egyptian culture, is defined



by her silence: a film of the giant Sphinx at Giza, rephotographed in slow motion, ends with a close-up of the creature's closed mouth, referring perhaps to an absence of language, or the negative place of woman in patriarchal language.

The various connotations of the Sphinx figure serve as a signpost to what is a central concern of the film: the consideration of what might be called a forgotten history of femininity, forgotten in the sense that the contents of the unconscious are forgotten. As psychoanalytic theory emphasises, the unconscious is structured like a language; and a reading of Freud shows how like the process of solving a riddle is the work of retrieving unconscious memories, of bringing the past into the present. That past is, of course, the pre-oedipal past of the child which lacks language (literally the infant) and which is as yet socially neuter, since it is the acquisition of language which signals entry into the patriarchy.

The forgotten history, then, can mean the kind of history to which psychoanalysis, in adopting the Oedipus myth as a kind of metaphor, immediately addresses itself. And it may also mean history in the more conventional sense of the word, the kind of history that is largely absent (or repressed) as far as women are concerned, the repression sometimes taking the displaced form of myths of societies of Amazons and prehistoric matriarchies. On one level and with varying degrees of explicitness, this exploration informs the structure and content of the whole film.

The story in the long section is about the close relationship of a woman, Louise, with her child, which excludes the father, who leaves them. Louise has to find a job, and encounters difficulties with childcare arrangements. She involves herself in a campaign for a nursery at her workplace. In the course of all this, a close relationship grows between her and a woman she meets at the child's nursery. The question of motherhood and of the relationship between mother and child is posed as crucial in the story, both for the characters and for the spectators, and it is possible to understand the film simply as a rehearsal of the familiar series of events I have outlined. But this would mean missing the

significance of the other six sections and even of much of the narrative itself.

The mother-child relationship is important in the film not simply as a means of examining the personal development of one woman, nor even as a peg for a political demand, although this is important. But it is problematic, and at one point the question is asked: can a childcare campaign attack anything fundamental about women's oppression? — which raises the issue of those wider implications of the mother-child relationship addressed by psychoanalysis.

These issues are neatly posed when the two women visit Louise's husband who shows them a film and a videotape of Mary Kelly, who made the *Post Partum Document* (see SR 53). The husband refers to the woman's dependence on the child. The voice and images of Mary Kelly then shift the discourse explicitly towards an address of the issue of motherhood in psychoanalytic terms. Here it is that the rest of the narrative is foreshadowed. There is a move towards an examination of the question of pre-oedipal "language" and the unconscious, as Louise thinks about "the power of forgotten history", and the search for that history and a positive order outside patriarchy. Since such a solution to the riddle posed by woman must be impossible now, the movement towards it can be represented only on the level of fantasy: here in the form of a story of the discovery of a box labelled "anatomy is no longer destiny" which contains the key to the riddle, whose form is that of a dream, a manifestation of the unconscious, the forgotten history.

The film ends with an image of a puzzle being solved: two blobs of mercury are guided to the centre of a maze and shaken out again. Is this the determinative symbol, "the picture that contains the whole series of pictures in itself or helps clarify or explain them"? Not quite, perhaps because that would suggest a closure the film cannot have: it can explore the ramifications of the riddles of the Sphinx, but — precisely because the only forbidden term in a riddle is its answer — can point towards a solution only in attempting to examine or represent what is absent, repressed or forgotten in a patriarchal order.

Annette Kuhn

## View 2

*Riddles of The Sphinx* has the rare quality of being able to put over a complex subject articulately. For me its value lay in its immediacy. As a parent I could identify with the central issues and yet be drawn through them into contemplating a mass of related (but hidden) contradictions that I had never been able to think about clearly before.

The key issue is the exploration of motherhood in a patriarchal society, given that in it women remain dispossessed individuals in a largely alien culture; and given that patriarchy has relegated child-rearing to a non-status occupation. It is not surprising that most women find motherhood double-edged — in one sense it's desired and in another it's depreciated. Childcare means drudgery and loneliness and it's difficult for women not to undervalue their role as mothers in the same way that society does. In a crucial scene in the film the mother, in a park with her child, wonders if it is better to be exploited outside in the "real" world of work, or at home with her child, albeit dependent and invisible. The weaning of the mother from the child is central to the film. The father leaves home because he cannot penetrate the mother-child

relationship. The woman is left to seek out another world more compatible, a female world, where women's values, their unspoken history, unvoiced suppression and their mysteries can be allowed to surface and become recognisable.

The "weaning" always has to be faced at some point. In the film it starts when the woman puts her child in a nursery and goes out to work. Yet the "real" world of unions, work, campaigning for a nursery, do not always seem in touch with her central problems. The former have their place in the patriarchal world, whereas the silent mysteries of a woman's life at home, in the house, close with her child are unvoiced both in the "real" world and to herself: only, it seems, in a women's collective identity is the silence beginning to break.

Although complex, the form of the film is integral to its meaning, and helps to clarify and compound several relationships. For example, at the beginning the mesmeric, numbing music through long shots of the Sphinx continues on into the household scenes of the mother feeding the child and putting her to bed, leaving you with no doubt as to the shared history of the sphinx-woman, their symbolic relationship.

Lisa Vine

Available from The Other Cinema, Tottenham Street, London W1.

# EXHIBITION

## SELF IMPRESSIONS

### Photographers' Gallery (London)

Dear *Spare Rib*,  
Self Impressions is an exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery in which the photographers have used their photography "to examine their lives, to say what they think of themselves". (Sue Davies, director of the gallery, Sunday Times, April 3rd). In general many of the reviews have been uncritical of the exhibition and as such some viewers will have had preconceived ideas — one idea being that these pictures are not sexist pictures. How could they be when they are taken by women?

It seems to us that the latter fact does not exclude them from the sexist arena. Women can be adept at seeing themselves through

male eyes and these women photographers are no different. Why the pre-dominance of female nudity? The media continually confronts people with images of naked, passive females associated with selling products or selling sex. These photographs are obviously not selling products but why have these photographers held onto the usual stereotypes? They have given us no verbal explanation of this so we have to take the images at their face value.

Shirley Beljon's photographs certainly seem to match up to the clichéd playboy ideal; where is her alternative to the posed, black-stockinged, strategically suntanned women? At the other end of the fetishist scale Joyce Tennyson Cohen exhibits romantic, ethereal versions of herself. What is she? At worst she is an idealised art object, at best the wide-eyed model as seen



# reviews

everyday in flake adverts. In general there are a lot of photos with headless figures and bodiless legs, and a preponderance on the

elements of mystery and narcissism. Why the retreat into these essentially male defined categories?

What should women be?

These photographs imply that women are simply their bodies. The photographers exclude themselves from any other kind of human

experience, even that which is termed interior, such as, problems, joys, hopes, fears, thoughts, etc. Thus they condemn themselves, as the media condemns women daily, to an existence as a passive body without thought or action.

Anne McNicholes and Moira Knowles, 29 Lebanon Court, Richmond Road, Twickenham.

Dear Anne and Moira, Thank you for writing. Obviously the questions you raise can best be answered by the photographers themselves, but we'd like to raise some points in response to your letter.

Yes, a number of the photographs did appear sexist although the intentions may have been entirely contrary. A lot would have been clarified if there had been more information, even personal statements by each woman — it would have put the whole exhibition in perspective and avoided misinterpretation.

Inevitably both photographers and subjects have internalised sexism but some images of naked women, we felt, went beyond the conventional, self-conscious, passive "Nude". They suggest a very different relationship between subject and viewer. The women are self-possessed, not offering themselves up for consumption. Take for example Shirley Beljon's photograph of her mother in the bath.

You ask "Why the predominance of female nudity?" These photographer's work can be seen as part of women's attempt to explore and reclaim their bodies for themselves.

But photography is loaded with sexist associations: not only through its commercial use but also because certain techniques have developed sexist overtones.

Some of the women seemed particularly caught up in the visual clichés of photography; the object off centre, a strong light from one side until the photographic process becomes the dominant concern, and in many cases, the camera fails to be used as a means of self examination and reassessment.

Annie, Laura and Rosie. *Self Impressions* is a touring exhibition. Contact Sue Davies, Photographers' Gallery, 8 Great Newport Street, London WC2. Tel: 01 836 7860

## Self Impressions

## photographs by women

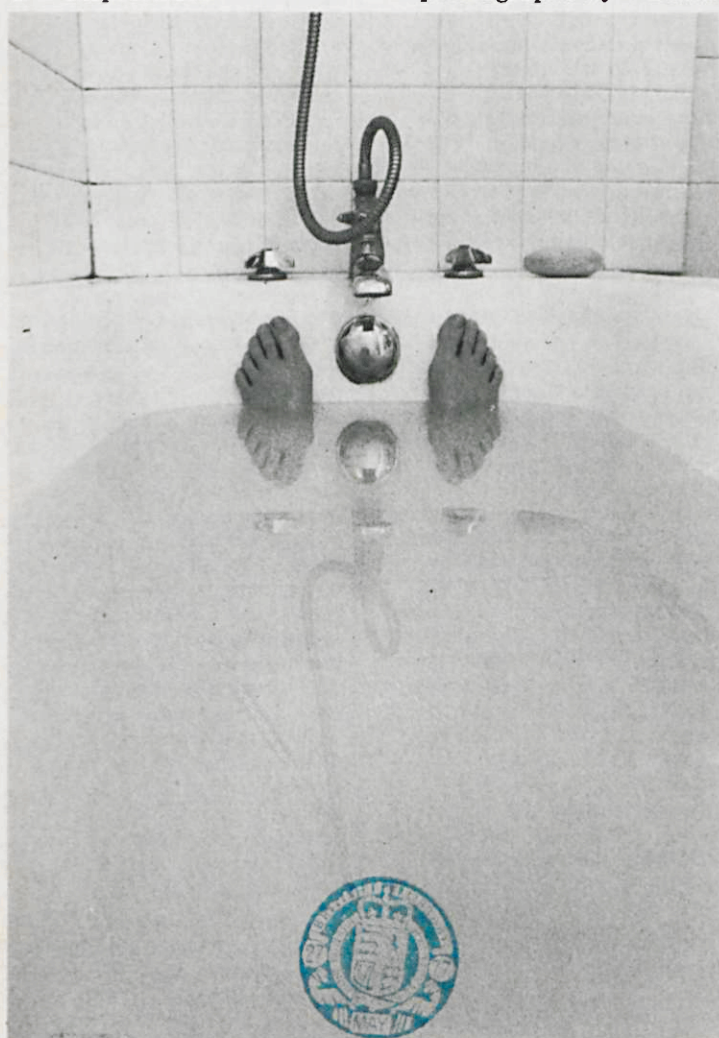


Photo by Linda Benedict Jones — safely non-sexist.



Shirley Beljon — sending up sexism?



Photo by Shirley Beljon — confronting the camera.



# BOOKS

## THE BIG BIRTH BOOM

Two big new birth books already this spring reflect not only growing concern that birth should be a woman controlled experience, but also our interest in the medicalisation of birth and the role of midwives. *Hard Labour—A Realist's Guide to Having a Baby* by Jean and John Lennane (Victor Gollancz £5.95) is just that — in fact every pregnant woman I know who's read it has found it to be *too* realistic! It offers little or no hope of a pleasant experience to come. However its strength lies in the woman-directed chapters on taboo subjects — like medical and social attitudes towards pregnant women, and in other sharp observations particularly about the medical profession: 'an obstetrician is in a position of high status and high income, and spends his professional life treating patients who, in occupying a woman's 'proper place', are nearly always of low status and no income.'

There is an honest section on pain in labour; the authors have little time for 'natural' childbirth methods, place the blame for excessive suffering squarely on the shoulders of doctors for not giving adequate pain relief (the 'in suffering shalt thou bring forth children' syndrome lingering on); and also write (with the compassion lacking in other sections of the book) on infant death and on post natal emotions and adjustments.

But despite their sympathy towards women and antipathy towards the medical profession (the authors are themselves both doctors) in the end they come down on the side of the professionals. Their abrasive expectation that pregnant women can and will complain — for instance about procedures which they find distasteful, is unrealistic... if pregnant women with their double burden of loneliness and responsibility felt able to defend themselves without vulnerability we wouldn't have the harsh and unfeeling maternity services which exist in so many places today. So the book may well just lay yet another guilt trip of failure and inadequacy onto pregnant women.

The authors' ideas on women-controlled birth leads

them into little more than a cursory paragraph on home birth, because epidural analgesia isn't available in the home. And it is this which is the hub of their book and their enthusiasms. If all women had an epidural, freely available and theirs by right, all birthing problems could be solved. Unfortunately, while they're absolutely right to criticise lack of finance and research into safe drugs for women in labour, in their enthusiasm they fail to point out that any of the considerable hazards to epidurals and the lack of research before they came into common use. Perhaps this is because the book was written several years ago (few references are more recent than 1974) when the medical profession had just discovered epidurals and were selling them to us. They've missed the point that acceptance of an epidural also means acceptance of a totally hospital controlled and dominated birth in which a woman is once again passive and immobile, a helpless object. If the book were revised and updated, perhaps current research could be included. Even so a book which recognises that 'a woman's place is in the wrong' is certainly a change for the better from the usual 'hearts and roses' literature on birth.

*Midwives and Medical Men—A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and*

*Women's Rights* by Jean Donnison (Heinemann Educational £6.50) is a scholarly and academic book destined for the social history shelves of all university libraries, but full of fascinating details, gruesome anecdotes, vivid sympathy for woman healers and warm support for midwives as a female profession up against the male medicalisation of birth. A must for all of us who are seriously interested in women's history, though people without the time for such a detailed and absorbing book as Ms Donnison's might find "Wise-woman and Medicine Man" by Anne Oakley (essay in "The Rights and Wrongs of Women") to be similarly informative but much shorter!

Christine Beels

## A LITERATURE OF THEIR OWN:

*British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*  
by Elaine Showalter  
(Princeton £14.20)

It's rare to be able to recommend a book of literary criticism to do with women's studies, but this one is unusually sensitive and suggestive — it's the most comprehensive and readable work on women novelists so far. Ms

Showalter traces the development of the female tradition from 1800 to the present day. She sees women's fiction as moving through three phases: the 'Feminine' (1840-80) which imitated a male culture; the 'Feminist' (1880-1920) which asserted women's autonomy; and the 'Female' (1920-1970s) which demands understanding and self-knowledge as well as defiance in the attempt at freedom. "Feminism" comes under attack as only one of the threads of this tradition, and possibly the least effective.

But the whole book is packed with insight, ideas, anecdotes, history, biography, as well as scholarly interpretations. There are interesting revaluations of Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf (whose flight into androgyny is seen as evading and betraying the "woman question"), Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble and less well-known writers. Ms Showalter is especially good on the kinds of guilt and conflict experienced throughout this period by novelists trying to be both woman and artist. The female tradition emerges from this study as a powerful and dynamic literary subculture with its own momentum, which promises well for the future. Though it's a pity about the exorbitant price — try libraries.

Rosemary Jackson

## HOW TO SAVE YOUR OWN LIFE

by Erica Jong  
(Secker & Warburg  
£3.90)

"What happened to Isadora Wing when she stepped out of the tub? Did she learn to fly at last? How To Save Your Own Life picks up Isadora's story three years after the events of *Fear of Flying* and provides the answers to these questions — and much more. With two marriages and a best-selling novel behind her, Isadora is by now an older, wiser and somewhat more rueful heroine."

She's also a more confused and desperate woman than this publisher's blurb suggests, and the answers we're offered in *How To Save Your Own Life* will make many women angry. It's an inconsistent, romantic and in some ways anti-feminist novel. Isadora does



Erica Jong

learn to fly — out of her nine-year-old marriage and into the arms of another man. She doesn't learn to save her own life, HE saves it. He saves her from loneliness, not writing, being unloved...

from promiscuity, "lesbianism", from herself, from the world. Yet this "happy ending", this celebration of erotic heterosexual coupledom is totally unconvincing. The tone of it is hysterical and sentimental, so that as romantic propaganda it fails. Only in some of the poems at the end of the book does any sense of happiness or resolution emerge.

These contradictions, in the content and in the way it's written, make it a disconcerting book to appear from the fringes of the women's movement in 1977. It expresses within itself all the contradictions about sex and love which women have to live through. For this reason I felt I learnt something from it — not to do as Isadora does, nor to accept Erica Jong's recipe for salvation, but to understand afresh the attractive and repulsive nature of romantic love.

As in her 1973 best-seller, Erica Jong uses the first-person confessional method.



# reviews

But in *Fear of Flying* there's the suspense of what happens next as Isadora whizzes around Europe with her Laingian lover, searching through her past, her marriage, her writing for a new sense of herself; written in a sharp, witty style, it's crammed with incidents and jokes — jokes about being Jewish, about sex, psycho-analysis and European lavatories. *How To Save Your Own Life* is less funny and more fragmented and it doesn't rely on suspense. We're told on the first page that she does leave her husband and again, when she meets Josh, that a year later it all works out. The real centre of the novel is about the process of ending a long-term relationship, how a woman comes to terms with her own dependence and complicity, and learns to feel angry rather than guilty.

Thus the husband, Bennett, is presented through Isadora's eyes; her love-hate view of him and their marriage charts the changes in her consciousness. Early in

the book he's described as a nice, supportive "Leonard Woolf" type husband. But the revelation of an old affair of his produces acute feelings of betrayal and jealousy, all the "forgotten" antagonism and repressed rage at years of emotional denial, come flooding to the surface. Supported by feminist friends she moves toward a decision and the story of their marriage comes to a traumatic climax with his parting statement: "So leave. You'll never write another book as long as you live." If Jong had fully developed this aspect, or stopped here she would have written a powerful novel. But between her father-figure husband and the commitment to the new brother-lover, Isadora has other adventures including a lesbian affair.

I found this section very offensive and heterosexist. Yet Isadora is a very heterosexual woman. She is using her woman lover as a substitute-man, as revenge on her husband, as an exercise in

what she herself calls 'bisexual chic': . . . "I was also fascinated by the act itself, seeing my body's mirror-image in another body, not the cosmic clash of cock and cunt, but the lilting, soft, safe, rocking of woman against woman. *Safe*. That was the word I was seeking. Men were lethal; this was *safe*." (p. 150) Whatever the author's intentions, this is an excellent exposure of what making love to another woman means for this very heterosexual woman. It lacks "Cosmic" significance, it lacks danger, it lacks "otherness", so it's safe — which it isn't of course for her lover Rosanna, nor for any lesbian. I also read an unconscious self-hatred in her attitude to the other woman's body; oral sex, it seems, is what women do for men.

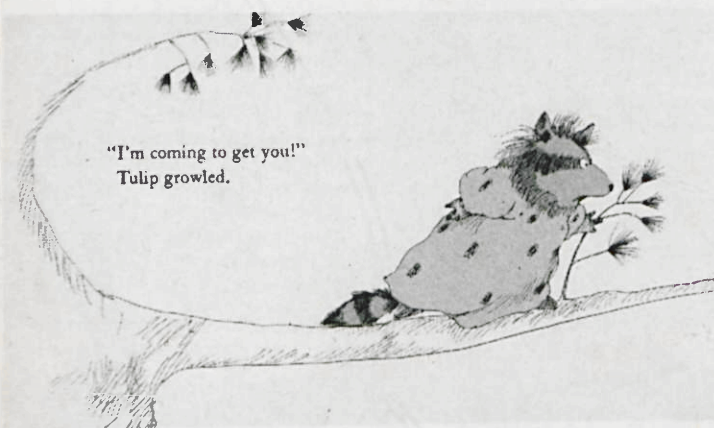
So women are not a real alternative for Jong's heroine. Nor is independence. She has a glimpse of this on the plane to Los Angeles, when she loses her fear of flying and decides "Home was wherever I was". But she

can't maintain a sense of home, of her own identity without a man's love and soon is saying with appalling schmaltz that "Josh's warm, funny smile was where I lived now".

Isadora's dilemma is reduced to the old question 'Which man?' She capitulates, without too much struggle, to an individual solution of phallogocentric romantic love. Yet despite all this I found reading the book useful. I'd criticise Erica Jong for presenting the choices she does, for providing no serious alternatives for her heroine — the movement, women's groups, a sense of collective struggle are noticeable by their absence. I could want a different ending, a different novel. But finally, *How To Save Your Own Life* stands as a testament to what women are up against personally and collectively, and how urgently we need to create different forms of love and validation; in short, alternative ways of saving our own lives.

Jean Radford

## BOOKS for children



### FAMILY FUN

NOISY NORA by Rosemary Wells (Collins £1.75)

BENJAMIN AND TULIP by Rosemary Wells (Kestrel £1.50)

In *Noisy Nora*, Nora Mouse is neglected by Mum and Dad (apron and pipe) as they bath, bed and read to older sister and baby brother. So she upsets furniture, makes a mess and hides. Funny pictures and verse.

*Benjamin and Tulip* has sturdy Tulip bullying not so sturdy Benjamin. They're raccoons and they finish up spitting melon seeds at each other. Good fun.

Andrew Mann, Children's Rights Workshop

ZIA by Scott O'Dell (Oxford University Press, £2.95)

Although it has a life of its own, this fine novel about nineteenth century native Americans is best read as the sequel to O'Dell's *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*, the story of Zia's aunt Karana who was marooned there for eighteen years.

Written in the first person, *Zia* is the story of how Zia, Karana's fourteen-year-old niece, resolves to rescue her aunt from the island. Her life at the Mission of Santa Barbara, her courageous attempt to reach the island and her imprisonment by the anti-Indian Mexican garrison are all simply told. This book is a moving testimony to the life endured by dispossessed Indians at that time, their refusal to accept servitude and their proud maintenance of family and cultural links. (11 upwards)

HUCK AND HER TIME MACHINE by Gillian Avery (Collins £3.50)

This is a new sort of book from Gillian Avery — its contemporary Oxford setting and use of fantasy (the Time Machine) are a far cry from her usual historical novels about the last century, well-known for their wit and for an occasional positive girl (*The Warden's Neice*, *Ellen's Birthday*, *Ellen and the Queen*).

In this book the Huxtable children are abandoned by their mother who goes off to a Globe Freedom movement conference in the US. These children are stereotyped as middle class, lefty, into jumble sale clothes, prison pickets, non rigid sex roles, domestic squalor, etc. Huck uses the Time Machine to get rid of her noisier siblings and the reader can hardly blame her. Avery's attempt at a 'modern' style has made each child 'shriek', 'shrill' and 'bawl' throughout a book in which none of the characters achieve the warmth of her previous work. (11 upwards)

THE FARTHEST-AWAY MOUNTAIN by Lynne Reid Banks (Abelard £1.95)

Lots of fairy-tale conventions here — an ogre, a witch, a bottomless pool, etc., but unusually, a brave and resourceful girl, Dakin, is the one who breaks the spell that has held *The Farthest-Away Mountain* in its thrall for centuries. Pleasant and unpretentious writing. (8-11)

Rosemary Stones, Children's Rights Workshop



# come to the party

5 years old

equal pay now equal pay now!!

next month's  
our fifth birth-  
day and we're  
celebrating  
with a very  
**SPECIAL**  
birthday  
issue...

...its special, with extra pages and  
includes articles on: What its like to be a lesbian's  
daughter  
The Womens Liberation Movement in Spain  
Women in Punk Rock  
Feminism and Spirituality in the USA  
Short story by Fay Weldon  
Unpublished poem from  
Erica Jong

AND lots and  
lots more  
**\* SO \***  
please make  
sure of your  
copy

order it from  
your news  
agent now  
Fill in the  
form  
below and  
subscribe  
groups..  
order 5  
or more.

direct  
from us  
phone  
01-253-4792  
its  
cheaper-  
25%  
discount

Happy Birthday

To: Linda Phillips, Spare Rib  
Subscriptions, 114 George Street,  
Birkhamstead  
Herts HP4 2EJ

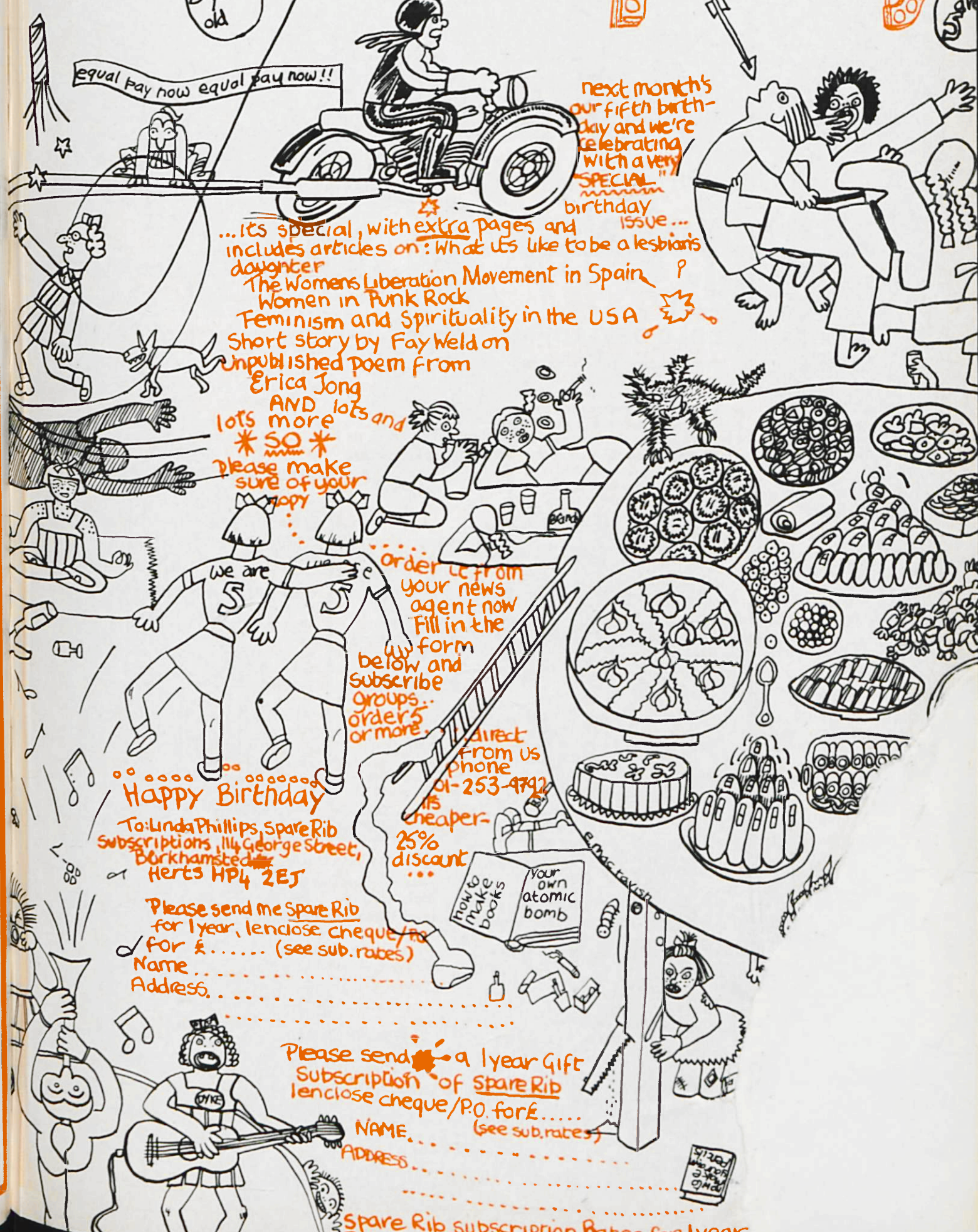
Please send me Spare Rib  
for 1 year, I enclose cheque/PO  
for £..... (see sub. rates)

Name.....  
Address.....

Please send a 1 year Gift  
Subscription of Spare Rib  
I enclose cheque/PO for £.....  
(see sub. rates)

NAME.....  
ADDRESS.....

Spare Rib subscription Rates for 1 year  
Europe & Sea Area





ANGRY ABOUT THE WIDENING GAP BETWEEN THE RICH COUNTRIES AND THE POOR? YOU'LL FIND

# THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS AND THE ACTION

IN THE FIGHT FOR A BETTER WORLD WITH THE

## NEW Internationalist

THE ONLY POPULAR CAMPAIGNING MAGAZINE ON WORLD DEVELOPMENT



The New Internationalist is a pioneering non-profit making venture with 17 thousand regular subscribers. It explains the connections and the conflicts between developed and developing countries: why the coffee in your cup is of crucial importance to Tanzanian farmers: why the cotton workers of Colne and Calcutta are at loggerheads. And it's a magazine you'll enjoy reading. The New Internationalist is no dry economics journal nor dreary political diatribe.

We promise not to bore you — just to inform you rapidly, shock you sometimes, infuriate you occasionally and entertain as well.

No. 41 — India's State of Siege — Your guide to an astonishing country under siege now as ever before — the people, the politics, the pressures.

No's 42 & 43 — Basic Needs — A two part investigation into the prospects of meeting everyone's basic needs. Food, shelter, medicine — is there enough to go round?

No. 44 — What's News? — Distortion, censorship, propaganda and truth. A special report on global media.

Collect your monthly copies of the New Internationalist and you'll know what's going on — and why.

"COULD WELL SET A NEW PATTERN IN AROUSING PUBLIC INTEREST" *The Guardian*



FREE MAGAZINES AND WALLCHART

'Population and People' 2" x 48" wallchart highlighting the real issues

TRIAL OFFER

KEEP THE FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Special binder available

- 1 Attractive popular presentation of all the crucial links between rich and poor nations.
- 2 Hard hitting reports on the governments, the companies and the people that matter.
- 3 Concise layman's guides to important subjects — oil, population, trade, shipping, food, multi-nationals, tourism, gold.
- 4 Builds up into a handy bookshelf reference of the key facts and arguments.



### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

white South Africans earn on average fourteen times as much as blacks.

the average American will consume in a lifetime five times as much as an Indian?

a major drug company has been over-charging Latin American countries by 6,000%?

"A WELCOME CHANGE FROM THE EMPHASIS ON STARVATION AND PRIMITIVE LIVING" *Times Ed. Supp.*

### 3 MONTHS FREE TRIAL

But you don't have to take our word for it. The subscription we're offering is £4.75. However, if you fill in the coupon below you will receive your first three months copies and a full colour wallchart completely free. Then if not completely satisfied all you need do is write to us before three months from the date below have elapsed and we will cancel your subscription. You can keep everything you have received and it won't have cost you a penny.

Send for your free copies today — you don't even need a stamp — to New Internationalist, FREEPOST, Wallingford, OXFORD OX10 0BR

**Internationalist** FREEPOST, WALLINGFORD, OXFORD OX10 0BR

Please send me, without obligation, my free copies of the next 3 issues of the New Internationalist plus the 'Population and People' wallchart.

If I do not wish to continue after the three months trial period I will write and let you know within 3 months of the date below and will not owe you a penny.

If I do wish to continue receiving the magazine regularly, I need do nothing. You will send the Bankers Order to my bank and continue to send me the New Internationalist each month. Name and address of your bank in BLOCK LETTERS please

To .....

Please pay to Nat West Bank, East Greenwich (60-07-16), the sum of £4.75 on receipt and annually thereafter until cancelled, for the account of the New Internationalist (A/C No 43615074).

Your name and address in BLOCK LETTERS please.

Mr/Mrs/Miss .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Devopress Ltd, Reg in London No 1085127, Reg Office 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

Offer valid in UK & Eire and for Bankers Orders only.

NO STAMP NEEDED  
SEND NO MONEY

SR4



Page	Title	Author	Rights
1	"Photographic Still" (2nd take)	O'Shea, Mary	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for "Photographic Still" (2nd take). Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
4	Letters		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
5	Letters		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
6	All a girl needs is a guru	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
6	Bhagwan pictured in the Rajneesh newsletter, wearing Yves St Laurent towel		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Bhagwan pictured in the Rajneesh newsletter, wearing Yves St Laurent towel. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
7	All a girl needs is a guru	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
7	Meditation at Kalptaru, a London Rjneesh centre		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Meditation at Kalptaru, a London Rjneesh centre. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
8	All a girl needs is a guru	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
9	All a girl needs is a guru	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
9	Bagwan in the beautiful gardens of the ashram		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Bagwan in the beautiful gardens of the ashram. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
10	All a girl needs is a guru	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
10	Feature	Fell, Alison	Usage Terms: © Alison Fell
12	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
12	mature women have tremendous strength	Harrap, Peter	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for mature women have tremendous strength. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.



13	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
14	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
15	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
15	Judith Flint	Rusher, Mark	Usage Terms: © Mark Rusher. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
16	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
17	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
17	Pat Turner	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
18	Working For the Union	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
19	Rome - in solidarity with Claudia Caputi		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Rome - in solidarity with Claudia Caputi. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
	Thousands demonstrate in front of Rome's law		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Thousands demonstrate in front of Rome's law courts



19	courts during the gang rape trial		during the gang rape trial. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
20	Rome - in solidarity with Claudia Caputi		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Rome - in solidarity with Claudia Caputi. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
20	Marie Murray jailed for life		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Marie Murray jailed for life. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
20	South Africa: The dreaded words red and black		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for South Africa: The dreaded words red and black. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
21	Cartoon	Ruth, Jaeggi	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Cartoon. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
22	What IS a self-defined sexuality? - one day workshop	Ryan, Joanna	Usage Terms: © Joanna Ryan
22	Uruguay: Outlawing contraception	Sharpe, Sue	Usage Terms: © Sue Sharpe
23	What IS a self-defined sexuality? - one day workshop	Ryan, Joanna	Usage Terms: © Joanna Ryan
23	"Not just the same old gang"	Hutt, Jane	Usage Terms: © Jane Hutt AM
23	Stabbing out lesbianism		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Stabbing out lesbianism. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	Photograph	Tudor, Catherine	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Photograph. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	What did you learn in school, today, dear?		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for What did you learn in school, today, dear?. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
24	hands		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for hands. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
25	Women's Liberation News	Parker, Rozsika	Usage Terms: © Rosie Parker (Rozsika Parker)



			(deceased)
25	Art work: Awakening by Nenne van Dijk		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Art work: Awakening by Nenne van Dijk. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
26	"The trouble with you Women's Libbers is you've got no sense of humour" - stroppy new satire	Nicholls, Jill	Usage Terms: © Jill Nicholls
26	Bouncing Back With Kenyon	Rusher, Mark	Usage Terms: © Mark Rusher. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	"The trouble with you Women's Libbers is you've got no sense of humour" - stroppy new satire	Nicholls, Jill	Usage Terms: © Jill Nicholls
27	Bouncing Back With Kenyon		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Bouncing Back With Kenyon. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
28	"The trouble with you Women's Libbers is you've got no sense of humour" - stroppy new satire	Nicholls, Jill	Usage Terms: © Jill Nicholls
28	New improved Pill?	Parker, Rosie	Usage Terms: © Rosie Parker (Rozsika Parker) (deceased)
28	Builder loses		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Builder loses. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
28	Fashion workers for equal pay		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Fashion workers for equal pay. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
28	Fashion workers for equal pay	Sturrock, John	Usage Terms: © John Sturrock. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
29	Harrassment now official	Wilson, Amrit	Usage Terms: © Amrit Wilson. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
29	On the May Day march in London	Sturrock, John	Usage Terms: © John Sturrock. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You



			may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
30	Chambermaids Strike at Station Hotel	Sharpe, Sue	Usage Terms: © Sue Sharpe
30	Madeline Harvey	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
31	Refugees Meet		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Refugees Meet. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
31	Fighting Sexism through the Unions	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
35	Women's Art 1877-1977		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Art 1877-1977. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
36	Women's Art 1877-1977		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Art 1877-1977. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
36	Artwork: Suzanne Valadon Nude with Palette (1927)	Valadon, Suzanne	Usage Terms: Public Domain
36	Artwork: Gwen John Girl With Bare Shoulders	John, Gwen	Usage Terms: Public Domain
37	Women's Art 1877-1977		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Art 1877-1977. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
40	Illustration	MacTavish, E.	Usage Terms: © Euphemia MacTavish
42	The EGA Stays OK	Weir, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Weir/Mason
42	Riddles of the Sphinx	Kuhn, Annette	Usage Terms: © Annette Kuhn
43	Riddles of the Sphinx	Kuhn, Annette	Usage Terms: © Annette Kuhn
43	Self impressions		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Self impressions. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	Photograph		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Photograph. Please



			contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	Photograph		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Photograph. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
45	The Big Birth Book	Beels, Christine	Usage Terms: © Christine Beels
45	A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing	Jackson, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Jackson
45	How To Save Your Own Life	Radford, Jean	Usage Terms: © Jean Radford
45	Erica Jong	Yule, Paul	Usage Terms: © Yule, Paul. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	How To Save Your Own Life	Radford, Jean	Usage Terms: © Jean Radford
46	Noisy Nora	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	Benjamin and Tulip	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	Zia	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	Huck and Her Time Machine	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	The Farthest-Away Mountain	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
46	book illustration:		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for book illustration: . Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.